



Newsletter



Rivelin Valley Conservation Group

Summer 2014 no 91

Through The Chair

Welcome to our summer newsletter. A rather soggy start but finally the sun came out and the opportunity for some wonderful walks. Straight after work why not throw a picnic together and head out to the countryside. You don't have to wait until the weekend. Just go out and do it. It doesn't go dark until after 9am this time of year so lots of time to enjoy yourselves and recharge your batteries to help you get through the winter.

We have an up and coming event in Rivelin Park in support of Heritage Open Days. We intend to provide lots of educational interest for yourself and the kids to learn about our Valley history and its wildlife. If you have any photos or memorabilia then please share them with us or just come and tell us your story. 10:30 – 14:30 Sunday 14th September.

We also have a good programme of speakers lined up for the Autumn and Winter months and would love to see you there beginning with Paul Buckland in September with a talk about Iceland and Greenland and in October I will be giving a second bee talk on The Honey Bee at Knowle Top Chapel Stannington. And the good summer means there will be lots of honey for sale.

Please write to us with your stories for our newsletter and let us know if you have any suggestions or ideas for the future direction of the RVCG. We have in excess of 500 members with a task team of around 40 members and some 80 volunteers contributing to the running of the RVCG

Graham Appleby
RVCG Chairman

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Membership Renewal

Many thanks for your membership renewal. If you have not renewed, it is not too late though forms were sent out to you in the first newsletter of the year. If you have not got a form just send your name and address and £3 to M Sanderson, 35 Den bank Cresc S10 5PB. Please do not send a cheque on its own without your details. We have several people who share the same surname and it will avoid confusion. We still keep our fee at £3 per household.

Donations

Once more you have been very generous. Thank you to Alesbrook, Fletcher, Frost, Ollin, Morton, Piermattei, Revitt, Culmer, Hall, Hill, Lawrence, Shaw, Edmunds, Goodwin, Hall, Loasby, Rybinski, Habershon, Humphries, Wood and Duggan, also to Pauline Higbid for a donation in memory of her husband , Dan. Donations from our members have now reached £1255 so far this year and enables Keith to wield his whip keeping our task group in line!

Don't forget to join us at our new season of events. You can bring friends and family as well – they do not have to be members.

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Task Team News

Sunday March 25th 2014

A big thank you to the 12 people who turned out and gave up their Bank Holiday Sunday to resurface the length of footpath between Wolf Wheel and Frank Wheel. It has made a massive difference to this footpath. The last few of us still standing gave everything and we struggled to get the tools back up to the cars with nothing left in our tanks.

Sunday June 30th 2014

Well done to the team that turned out today to do the cutting back at Upper Cut (Glen Bridge). One of the most photographed remains of a wheel pit that we have left in the valley was beginning to disappear under the vegetation and needed a serious cut back. It never ceases to amaze me how much work 14-18 people can get through in a few hours and how fast Mother Nature can regenerate it after we have left.

Also a big thank you to the team for the wonderful chocolate cake that seemed to appear from nowhere for my 60th birthday, very much appreciated.

All I want now is for the council to buy me a Villa in Spain and the job is sorted.

Keith Kendall

Keith and the Task Team are always ready to welcome any newcomers

An Evening Walk Through the Valley 20th May

Roger Kite led us on this walk starting at the Holly Bush Inn. Quite a lot of walkers joined us including some non members. The weather was fair and we passed the dams and remains of the old mill wheels, "that turned the grinding stones of long ago where knives and scythes were made before the war" as the Sheffield poet Barbara Barnsley wrote.

Then we climbed above the river and trees to Stannington and enjoyed the views across the valley towards Crosspool and Crookes. We had a steep descent back to the valley bottom and the Holly Bush where some stayed on for an evening drink. Thanks to Roger for conducting this walk

Margaret Sanderson

WW2 Bombs in the Valley

The following story of WW2 bombing was given by our committee member Sue Shaw. "One day when I was walking down Rivelin, I got talking to an old Stannington resident. Who told me about a WW2 bomb that landed on the former market garden on the patch of land just above Roscoe Dam which he said blew out all the windows on the allotments around two hundred yards from Hagg Hill." The above story tells of one of the many bombs that were dropped in our area.

According to a map in the book "Sheffield at War" published by The Star in 1987, there were several dropped close to Rivelin Valley Road and in the fields around. One is marked in the allotments between Hagg Lane and Stephen Hill and many more in Crosspool, Crookes and Stannington.

My family had a very close shave with a land mine dropped on two houses on Ringstead Crescent. This killed one family and a large crater remained there for several years. A photograph of the ruins is in Judith Hanson's book "Crosspool".

Houses nearby lost their roofs and windows and my parents was shocked to see the state of our house on leaving the air raid shelter. As well as external damage, inside the house ceilings came down and furniture was damaged. My sister had a china doll's tea set and it was lifted out of the house by the blast, still in its box and ended up in the middle of the road, unbroken.

In the middle of the night we had to walk to an uncle who lived close by as the house was so unsafe. Meanwhile his son walked to our house knowing that a bomb had fallen and such was the damage that he thought we would all be dead. My father was very pleased that Winston Churchill made people take out insurance against war damage but it took six months before we lived there again and some windows were replaced by frosted glass as there was a shortage of clear glass. The bomb site on Ringstead remained for many years and children enjoyed running up and down the steep slopes of the crater. Soon an elderberry tree grew in the bottom and was raided by neighbours to make elderberry jelly!

Margaret Sanderson

RVCG is very grateful for the help given to the group by Richard Jackson of Valleyside Garden Centre on Manchester Road.

The story of Valleyside is told below. The garden centre was built on the site of a disused quarry and some people might remember the noisy siren that was sounded whenever blasting was taking place usually on a Tuesday.

Valleyside Garden Centre

The site was first utilised for stone in the early 1800's when work began on the Sheffield to Manchester trans-Pennine Road. It was quarried by different people for the next 100 years, eventually being owned by WC Leng, the owner of Sheffield Daily Telegraph.

Herbert and Ernest Andrews bought the quarry on the death of Leng in 1921. Subsequent Andrews's family members quarried there until the 1960's when blasting ceased.

Eric Andrews could not find a use for the quarry until Brian and Marie Jackson opened Valleyside Garden Centre in 1972. Eric and Daisy Andrews had been family friends of the Jacksons, both families living on Lydgate Hall Crescent in the late 50's and early 60's. Brian Jackson left his job at Spear & Jackson Tools (no relation) and took the gamble of opening a garden centre in March 1972 in partnership with a Mr D Marriot. This partnership was dissolved after the Jacksons bought out the Marriots a few years later.

Stone was still being dressed and sold by Richard Brocklehurst for many years after the quarry ceased working.

The stone business was run from the old Quarry office which fronts onto Manchester Road.

As the garden centre grew, Richard Jackson started propagation and growing some stock behind the garden centre on spare land within the quarry curtilage. A greenhouse and potting shed were erected along with several poly tunnels.

In the 1980's any spare land was used to store caravans. Gradually the growing side of the business was reduced until all the land behind the garden centre was used for caravan storage.

The present owner, Richard Jackson,

purchased the garden centre from his parents in 1993, having worked previously for British Coal since leaving Newcastle University. Richard had worked weekends and holidays at the garden centre since he was 15 and until leaving university. Although he had a long personal tie with the garden centre there was no business interest until gaining an MBE from Sheffield University Business School and realising there was a family business ready to be bought.

Since the 90's the garden centre has grown steadily, adding new buildings and covered sales areas each year. In 2004 the new shop was built, doubling the floor space. In 2010 the Coffee Shop was built using the old quarry offices that had been previously used as a stone business, a builder's woodwork shop and latterly as a storeroom for the garden centre.

The emphasis is still on maintaining a traditional garden centre feel, selling quality British grown plants and a wide range of sundries. If it's not related to gardening then we don't sell it. This philosophy rather goes out of the window at Christmas now we are heavily into Xmas decorations.

We have always had a reputation for selling premium Xmas trees and garden centres are now synonymous with Christmas,

J Richard Jackson

**Another Allotment Story
Dad's Beans**

During WW2 people were encouraged to "Dig for Victory" and any spare plot of land was used for vegetable growing. So my father, not used to gardening other than weeding, lawn cutting and flower growing took an allotment down Stephen Hill.

He was taken in hand by the "old timers" and given a handful of runner bean seeds. He was told that these were the best ones to grow on this windy, north facing site (frequently 2° below the official Sheffield temperature taken at Weston Park).

He soon became proficient at vegetable growing and our back lawn was also dug up to provide more greens.

Some beans were dried and saved for replanting the following year. I continued growing them but in a house move, I lost them. Then an RVCG member, Heather Sharpe who was a neighbour of my Dad's said, "I still grow your Dad's beans" so she

passed some back to me and I continued growing them.

I was curious to know what variety they were so trawled round various seed companies and organisations for help but there is no DNA recorded for runner beans.

It was only Ryton Organic Gardens that provided an answer. I was told that even allowing for a little cross fertilisation, these beans, over the years would have adapted to this cold windy site.

So allotment holders – save your own seeds (and money) at the same time.

Margaret Sanderson

The Silver Birch

This is a tree that we take for granted. We see it everywhere but a recent article in the Sunday Times told how they could reduce pollution.

Lancaster University planted silver birch trees on the A6 and compared it to an unplanted section. The area with silver birches had 50% less pollution. It is thought that the minute hairs on the leaves trap pollution particles. According to the Field Guide to the Trees and Shrubs of Britain, silver birches and rowans are very hardy – they can grow further up mountains than any other tree. They can also put up with poor soil.

In ancient times birches were thought to have powers of renewal and purification, driving out evil spirits which led to the beating of delinquent youths. The Isle of Man only was the last place in Europe to stop this practice in 1976.

A better use of birch is to make besoms and its silver bark makes it an attractive tree.

Margaret Sanderson

Wanted

Is there anyone else who has an allotment or WW2 bomb story for this newsletter? (Or any other Rivelin story.) We would like to hear from you.

Also is there anyone who worked at "The Towers" on Sandygate Rd when Spear and Jackson's office moved there due to bombing on Saville Street or worked at the special school it later became?

Let's keep memories alive.

Please contact M Sanderson – see contacts list.

THE RECORDER

It was the wettest May for thirty one years, but also the warmest for six years. It is now past the summer solstice and already it is noticeable that the nights are drawing in. We have had some nice sunny days with enough rain to keep the gardens looking lovely. My garden looks quite pest free at the moment (hope I am not tempting fate). I have only seen the odd Small White butterfly and the slugs and snails have been hiding during the day because of over two weeks of dry weather. The main pests in my garden are two male pigeons who have been fighting in the fruit trees most days since the beginning of May. They are knocking the apples and plums off the trees. This has not happened before and may be territorial, or perhaps they just do not like each other.

There have been more corvids than usual in my garden this year. I have had eight Jackdaws and similar numbers of Rooks. They soon demolish the fat balls with their huge beaks. The Jackdaws can hang on the feeders but the Rooks swing the feeder and stab at the fat ball when it returns. Several people have heard a Cuckoo this year. We have two new species to the area – a bee and a bird. I get many bees on my cotoneaster, but this year one species has dominated the bushes. The Tree bumblebee (*Bombus hypnorum*) was first recorded in Wiltshire in July 2001 and has spread rapidly up the British Isles. It is very common on mainland Europe up to the Arctic Circle. This is the first year I have seen it and other people in the area have also noted it. The bird is a Ring-necked Parakeet (*Psittacula krameri*). A female bird was seen in Roger Kite's garden for a few days in June. This is not such good news for people with cherry trees, which the bird loves, and huge flocks have become a pest

for farmers in the south. There are about 8,600 breeding pairs, mainly around Greater London, but they have been recorded in every county in England and have also reached Wales and the borders of Scotland. They were very popular as pets in Victorian times and some will have escaped or been released.

I have managed to breed the frog tadpoles successfully and have released many into my garden. They now stand a better chance of survival against the Palmate newts. Robins, Dunnock, Sparrow, Great and Blue Tits have bred successfully, but no sign of any juvenile Blackbirds yet, although I know there are at least three nests nearby. I think they have had a hard time with the Magpies, Jackdaws, Rooks and Jays which pester them every day. I am delighted to tell you that I saw a large Hedgehog in my garden on the 30th June. Please look out for it and do not put slug pellets down so it has a better chance of survival. During the past two weeks there have been more hover flies about, and there is a good chance you will see a Hummingbird Hawk Moth this year. They like to feed on Valerian and Buddleia. Now the Ash trees are in full leaf keep an eye open for Ash Die Back disease ((browning and wilting of leaves at tip of branches) and report it to

www.forestry.gov.uk/chalara. Another alien plant to look out for is the Giant Hogweed, *Heracleum mantegazzianum*. This can grow up to five or six metres and has been recorded on Kelham Island and Salmon Pastures. It was introduced into gardens by 1820 and first recorded in the wild in 1828 (Harrap). This plant can cause serious skin problems and should not be touched. It is most likely to be found in damp places. Take a note or photo and report it.

Gareth Lewis volunteered to carry out an

Invasive Species survey of the river Rivelin on behalf of Yorkshire Wildlife Trust (YWT). He came across 3 instances of Japanese Knotweed together with 21 instances of Himalayan Balsam, 2 of which are on the Reaps Wood tributary. On a more positive note, he did not see any Giant Hogweed, or any of the 4 water based non-natives he was asked to look out for. Thank you Gareth for the results.

Thank you to all who sent in records

Sue Shaw - 7.3.14 - Great Spotted Woodpecker near Mousehole; 5.5.14 - Bat over garden; 8.5.14 - 2 Swifts over garden and later in month up to 16; 9.5.14 - 4 Jays at Havelock Weir; 15.5.14 - Crow mobbing Buzzard over Walkley; 18.5.14 - Rivelin Mill lead goit - lots of bluebells, Tree Creeper and Chiff Chaff.

Liz Hall, 21.4.14 - Swallow near Malin Bridge

Terry Howard - 19.4.14 - 3 Roe deer at Fox Hagg

Julie Lawrence - S10 - 29.4.14 - 3 bats patrolling around house (probably pipistrelle)

Mary Brazil - 31.3.14 - Hind Wheel - 2 Canada Geese on dam.

Doreen Best - 17.6.14 - Kingfisher perched on branch on river near Hind Wheel Dam; 29/30.6.14 - Dipper at Wolf Dam two days running; Doreen also delighted to catch a rare glimpse of a mole emerging from the undergrowth on 29.6.14 at the same place; she also had a Greenfinch on the garden feeders for a few days commenting that they were once common but are now rare visitors.

Andy Krupa - late April - saw a Stoat hunting around stone walls in Bingley Lane. 20+ Golden Plovers in fields between Flash and Onksley Lane and heard a Green

Woodpecker calling; 9.5.14 – Dippers seen near Rails car park; 10.5.14 – Swifts and House Martins regularly hawking insects round the valley; 12.5.14 – Cuckoo heard calling before dusk near Rails Road and Bingley Lane, Spotted Flycatcher seen in trees on Bingley Lane; 13.5.14 – Pair of Hares seen boxing on field on Bingley Lane (a prelude to mating).

Mark Longshaw – 18.5.14 – North Bank of Rivelin Valley/Wyming Brook – Roe Deer seen between Fox Hagg and Rivelin reservoir and saw another Roe on way back east of the Elliott Stone at Black Brook. Also heard his first Cuckoo of the year at the top end of Wyming Brook.

Margaret Sanderson S10 - 30.4.14 – Blackbird building a nest in climbing Hydrangea which proved to be a bad choice as the nest fell out on the 23.5.14; 12.5.14 – Bullfinch, Great Tit; 16.5.14 – Great Spotted Woodpecker, Jay, lots of Crows; 22.5.14 – 4 fighting and squawking Magpies(juveniles?); 10.6.14 – Bluetit flying backwards and forwards to feed four young with morsels from fat balls; 13.6.14 – Jackdaw, 3 Collared Doves; Stonefly larvae feeding on hard-boiled egg put in pond for tadpoles. All tadpoles gone but Margaret did not see any froglets leave the pond. Lots of Honey bees on climbing Hydrangea.

Claire Gregory 8.6.14 – Roe deer sighted by folks of Holly Hagg beside Back Lane, Crosspool.

Graeme Hodgson – 8.6.14 – Privileged to see three young Kingfishers huddled together at Frank Wheel where there are some good burrow sites. Regularly sees a Grey Heron successfully fishing, and it was a good spring for butterflies, seeing up to six species in a day.

Anne & Brian Ward SK30729295, S35 OHY – May 2014 – The soap opera continues in the bird box with the camera. Anne & Brian say that the Great Tit got his just desserts after ousting the Bluetit and then being turned out by a pair of Siskin. They built an amazing nest – very untidy with a roof on which hid what was happening. The male was very attentive to his mate and at least four eggs were laid. Unfortunately they were away 9 – 19th May and the nest was empty on their return. Let's hope there was a happy outcome.

Mark Habershon S10 – 25.6.14. If you want to see deer (or Kingfishers) get up early. Mark was in the lower Calver Field at 6am and saw a deer (probably Roe) in the middle which bounded off.

Keith Kendall 18.6.14 – Speckled Wood butterfly in the house (carefully put in garden).

Joan Buckland RVC Recorder