



Newsletter



Rivelin Valley Conservation Group

Autumn 2014 no 92

Through The Chair

Welcome to the autumn newsletter. A walk down the Rivelin Valley is very special at this time of the year. The tree canopies have turned their dense green foliage into beautiful autumn colours. The structure of the valley is becoming visible once again as the leaves begin to fall and slowly the valley floor turns the same colour as the tree canopy. What has been strange this year is the continuous run of warm weather and having witnessed some of my summer flowering shrubs having a second flush. Make hay while the sun shines!

I would like to welcome Helen Beardmore to the RVCG committee. Helen works for Peter Jones (of Dragons Den) and is Head of Education for his charitable foundation. Helen is considering taking on the role of publicity and advertising for the group. She is already an enthusiastic member of the task team.

I unfortunately missed one of our most exciting events in September when we organised a Heritage Open Day event in Rivelin Park. We revealed the history of the valley to local residents and in turn they provided us with some interesting stories. See centre page for details. We have also published a brand new version of our Walking in the Rivelin book priced at £6.95. It is full of lots of colour pictures and new information of the Rivelin Valley and will make an excellent Xmas present. We owe a great debt of gratitude to our very talented committee member Sue Shaw for managing both the HOD event and for producing the new book.

Thank you for your continued support
Graham Appleby
RVCG Chairman

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Donations

Thank you for all your generous donations that arrive with your renewals. So far this year, these amount to over £1200.

Thanks this quarter to Gregory, Moseley, Birkett, Skinner, Burnett, Warrender, Byrne, Sharkey, Nockells, Francis, Gaubert, Jordan, Olive, and Nowell.

Also welcome to new members.

More on King Edward's Hospital

The following is from Doreen Tandy who worked at the hospital in 1958-60.

A Damp Squib?

I remember it as a very happy place. Patients were very well treated although I didn't work on the wards. I was a Staff Nurse in the theatre and plaster room. Sister Ruth Eyre was a very caring but strict sister in charge.

On Bonfire night all the patients who could be moved went outside for a firework display. A porter, a very small man was in charge. As the first firework was lit a lighted match was dropped into the huge box containing the rest of the fireworks and an almighty bang followed until all the fireworks were used up. You can imagine the disappointment that was shared by all. All the patients were then put back to bed!

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The Towers Sandygate Rd

This is a landmark visible from most of the valley. It was built for the Sheffield Telegraph owner, William Christopher Leng in 1896. It is thought to be built in Scottish Baronial style. The lodge of the house is at the top of Coldwell Lane and is also built in the same style.

Ron Davey's Book "Reminiscing in Rivelin" says that there was a rumour that Leng hung himself from a beam but said that this was not true as his death certificate says that he died in his office in 1902 age 78. Another rumour was that he shot himself and the bullet hole in a beam was pointed out to later visitors. His son Christopher David Leng succeeded him and developed an adjoining farm and the Model Dairy on Coldwell Lane taking in milk from neighbouring farmers.

During WW2 Spear and Jacksons, the tool makers moved their offices here after being bombed out of Saville Street.

The large grounds were used for garden parties to raise funds for soldiers. Tombola, lucky dips, second hand clothes and jewellery figured on the stalls and everyone enjoyed trips up the tower to see the magnificent views.

A cookery book produced by the staff called "Salute the Soldier" was sold at these parties. It was full of wartime "make do and mend" recipes. Suet and lard appear frequently. Rationing was in force and eggs were in short supply so eggless cakes figured quite a lot in the book. Here's a cake recipe -

4 small cups of SR Flour

1cupful of Treacle

1 cupful of Sugar

1large tsp Bicarb Soda

1 cupful Aired Milk

Mix all together and bake slowly 1-1½ hours.

To improve wartime sausage you added chopped onions and herbs. Stand Pie consisted only of tinned pork sausage meat, flour and water. Wolmer pie was cheese, onions and carrots on a mashed potato base.

If you had some stale cheese you could grate it, add some dried egg, milk, salt and pepper, melt it all together and use it in a

sandwich.

One writer says, "Once cooked for 250 men in the army, nearly got shot for it - so no recipes".

Recipes from Spear and Jackson's American and Canadian subsidiaries are included.

A section on "Household Hints" told you to use a mixture of mustard, lard and camphor rubbed into the chest for coughs. Tea cloths were hard to get and wearing thin so it was a good idea to stand your cutlery in a pot to drain. It was suggested that you save your cigarette ash and use it to brush your teeth.

To remove corns from your feet you soaked them in hot water and Epsom Salts.

Here is a recipe for looking after your furniture:-

"Mix together half a gill each of turpentine, vinegar, methylated spirits and paraffin. Put in a bottle and shake well. Rub well into furniture and polish with a soft duster."

Ron Davey's book gives extensive information about The Towers but it is now out of print and the publishers (DS Publishing) do not seem to exist. The Towers has now returned to a private residence after housing boys with learning difficulties.

M Sanderson

The following information on The Towers was sent by Mrs Kath Finch.

My Dad, John Greaves (Jack) who had worked in the export department at Spear and Jacksons before and after the war, worked for a time at "The Towers" whilst living on Marsh Lane, Crosspool.

I can remember him telling me about the time there was a burst pipe on the top floor. All the staff stood at their office doorways with brooms, sweeping the water down the stairs.

In 1953, my parents and I moved to Westover Road, Sandygate where the garden adjoined the wood belonging to "The Towers", this being empty. We local children regularly played in the wood and made a den in the turreted stable which stood in the field at the top end of the gardens of the houses on Sandygate Park Road.

Are there any more stories about "The Towers" and does anyone else remember these stables?

Please contact M Sanderson

Some Recent Events RVCG WW1 Tea Party

Our annual BBQ changed into a tea party to remember WW1. Once more it took place in Ken's lovely garden with the wonderful views across the valley. We are very grateful to him for lending it to us. We were entertained by the ever versatile Graham with his guitar, ending with a sing song of relevant songs such as "Pack up your troubles in your old kit bag", "It's a long way to Tipperary", "If you were the only girl in the world" and "Keep the home fires burning".

We finished with Graham's song "On the Rivelin" and Ken and Sue appeared as usual with Ferrero Rocher chocolates and cups of tea.

The weather as always was fine for our annual occasion. Only once in RVCG history has it rained and that was just a few drops! Thank you to Pauline Higbid also Carole and Jeremy for making sandwiches.

Also thanks to the marquee putter uppers, the chair and table haulers and those who helped to clear up.

Thank you to everyone for contributing cakes and deserts.

Some Recent Events 8th Sept 2014 Paul Buckland on Iceland and Greenland

We visited these two northern countries with their exciting stories of the travels of Eric the Red and early settlers.

We learned of the early farms and the longhouses with their central fireplaces and of how settlers traded with dried fish and polar bear skins also learned of their diet which included seal meat, milk from cattle and crowberries.

Also everyone had lice and they were even on the floors of their houses.

Thank you to Paul for this look into the past.

Heritage Open Day 14th Sept

This was well attended and provided much information about the valley which included its history, wildlife and the work of RVCG in the valley and we also received some welcome donations.

Many people related their own stories of

the valley and some of them are retold here.

From Tony Hall - "As a boy my father used to play down Rivelin. After the swimming pool closed, he and his friends used one of the doors from the changing cubicles as a raft, which drifted towards the culvert. They both would leap onto the bank, fortunately simultaneously, otherwise it would have capsized and one of them would have been swept into the culvert and probably drowned.

Pat Reaney remembers the mill buildings still being in place in the late 1950's early 1960's. In particular the frontage of the buildings with arched windows, the bridge and some steps up to the mill.

Bernard Priest remembers ice skating on Walkley Bank Tilt (Havelock). They called it the first Dam. He said they were a little foolhardy and perhaps it was not the most sensible thing to do.

From CJB - Very much enjoyed the guided tour at 11am and my daughter was kept busy on the treasure hunt. A great day, Thank you.

Task Days Sunday September 28th 2014

In an attempt to cut down on fly tipping in the valley we have just completed a fence around the little car park opposite Coppice House Farm. This makes it more difficult for people to get vans and pickups into this car park as it is now just long enough for a car and is now more open for people to see the tippers.

Well done to the small group who turned out to do this as it turned out to be one of the hardest digs we have done.

The posts had to go down 22" and it was donkey work getting them that deep in this really tough area. It was not helped by having such a small group. The planning out and setting out of the holes should have been done with more care. More haste less speed as they say and in this case it proved to be true.

Keith Kendall

**Would you like to join the Task Team?
Keith Kendall would be pleased to hear from you. Don't think that Task Days are all as above!
Please see contacts list.**

THE RECORDER

I have never known so many consecutive misty, warm days, which highlighted the huge number of spiders webs, especially the orb webs, made even more beautiful by the pearlescent dew drops. Now the Indian summer seems to be coming to an end as there is a definite cool feeling to the wind.

The swifts are long gone, but there are still a few swallow and martin stragglers wending their way southwards. We have all watched the television with excitement and trepidation as the wildebeest migrate to and from their breeding grounds, facing the threat from lions and crocodiles waiting en route. I can barely watch the river crossings. Now substitute wildebeest with migratory birds, which travel much further with many dangers, including the vagaries of the weather, trapping, hunting and loss of habitat. We cannot control the weather, yet, but the other dangers are manmade. The Mediterranean is the danger zone. Millions of birds are killed every year to make a lot of money for a few people. Most people do not want this to happen. The lucky birds that make it back here to breed often find their feeding and nesting sites gone to re-development. Why are houses still being built on flood plains which are often traditional feeding grounds for many birds, and why do planners not insist on swift bricks and swallow nest boxes in new build or converted traditional nesting sites? What is so difficult? Has anyone got a swallow's nest under their eaves or in their outhouses? It used to be a common sight fifty years ago. Maybe people do not want the mess – a small price to pay for saving such an iconic bird. No wonder swift numbers are down by 38%. This year the most I have seen swirling round in the evening gathering was 17 – I used to see up to 200 not that long ago. It is more important than ever to garden for wildlife with the government's new planning policy for the greenbelt. Please let me know how your garden has fared this summer. My Michaelmas daisies are attracting the insects, and my cotoneaster bushes are full of berries. Hopefully they will attract the winter visitors, unless we have another mild winter and there is plenty of food around. Look out for the skeins of Pink-footed Geese flying north west as they will be on the move soon.

We had a very good attendance at our Heritage Open Day function in the valley. There were some very enthusiastic children interested in my nature exhibits. We did some pond dipping and were lucky enough to find a few creatures including cased and uncased caddis, flattened mayfly nymphs, freshwater limpets, flat worms, leaches and one, dead, sizeable rainbow trout, which had probably been thrown back in by a fisherman as we could not find anything wrong with it. Thank you to the following for sending in their records:-

Mavis Roadhouse, S10 – 11.7.2014 – Hummingbird Hawkmoth on Lavender for about 10 minutes. Mavis says she has got some 'muzzy' photos. Has anyone else seen this amazing insect?

Keith Kendall, S10 9.7.2014 – Male Sparrowhawk on garden wall at. 7.30pm.

Roger Kite, 4.5.2014 – On a walk round Redmires conduit path -2 Lapwing with 1 young, 4 Curlew, Skylark, Grouse and Meadow Pipits, and 6 ducklings on upper reservoir.

Bill Auckland – Late June – Bill was working at Holly Hagg when he saw a deer (probably Roe) cantering up the fields opposite, heading towards Clough Fields.

Doreen Best – 20.7.2014 – Saw a Heron standing in a small pool east of Wolf Dam, which then flew up the valley. Doreen says that up to five Greenfinches are daily visitors to the feeders, joining the regular Sparrows, Dunnocks, Blue Tits, Great Tits and Coal Tits, Blackbirds and occasional Starlings. She says they have had more garden birds on the feeders this summer than they did last winter. Another indication as to how mild it was last winter, and maybe the birds were nesting nearby.

Graeme Hodgson – 2.8.2014 – Saw two Common Hawker Dragonflies together at Hind Wheel and 1 at 3rd Coppice. Also saw a weasel hopping around on opposite bank at Black Brook. 29.7.2014 – saw a Kingfisher exiting Wolf Wheel downstream and then again at Swallow and says ' must have walked past the little fella'.

Derek Hastings S10 – 12.8.2014 – Observed a female Sparrowhawk on his back lawn, at 7.30pm, feeding on a rodent. Seems to be the time to look out for Sparrowhawks!

Joan Buckland (24.9.14)