



Newsletter



Rivelin Valley Conservation Group

Autumn 2015 no 96

Through The Chair

Welcome to the RVCG Autumn newsletter and hope you all had a good summer. The RVCG were in danger of having their garden party washed out and so we rearranged it for a week later which also meant a number of members were back from their holidays and were also able to attend making for a thoroughly enjoyable day. Throughout the summer, there have also been numerous Ruskin events including the pop up museum on South Road, Walkley which I hope you took an opportunity to experience as all the events were very professionally organised by Ruth Nutter and her team.

We also held our first open meeting of the autumn and what a wonderful inspirational talk Lloyd Powell gave on the Sheffield Castle bringing its history to life. Sheffield Castle seems to be a bit of a dark secret. Did anyone study it at school? I certainly didn't. In fact it appears that the foundations have never really been investigated properly by archaeologists and it has only recently attracted attention due to the demise of the Castle Market and future planning for the area. I think we may see some interesting revelations about the castle in the coming months.

I am pleased to report that we have now sold over 900 Walking the Rivelin books and have ordered another 1000. So please get your Xmas orders in now for this wonderful book. We are also looking for sponsors for our Rivelin Mill posts which could be in memory of someone or a really special Xmas present. Thank you for your continued support.

Graham Appleby
RVCG Chairman

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Donations

Once more you are very generous. Many thanks to these members for your donations since the last newsletter—Brown, Larkin/Hodgson, Swinsco/Kehoe, Packham/ Owen, Robinson, Ellis, Moseley and Tetchner, Your donations that come with your membership amount to nearly £1300 so far this year. This is very welcome to help the work RVCG does in the valley. Who would have looked after Rivelin if RVCG did not exist, especially when Sheffield Council is strapped for cash?

Also we thank our behind the scene workers who sort out delivery rounds, print out the newsletter (our chairman) and those who deliver the newsletter and other information to your door in rain hail and snow.

Wanted

I am always asking this question! We want your stories for this newsletter. Many of you have lived in this area for years and you are members because you are interested in the valley. Do you have anything that you can contribute to this newsletter no matter how small? We would like to know. Please contact Margaret Sanderson. (See above contacts list)

We thank Valleyside Garden Centre, Manchester Rd for supporting the RVCG

Task Team News

Task Day Sunday 27th September 2015

Graham took over today as it was one of the few Task Days I had to miss as I was getting my son settled at university.

A good number turned up on a fantastic autumn day to do some serious work on the Willow Tunnel and do some cutting back at the top end of the nature trail. Many thanks to Graham for taking charge and all who turned out. I hope it all went well.

Keith Kendall

Would you like to join the Task Team? It isn't all heaving boulders around, repairing paths, chopping down overgrowth, and wading in the river, just in case you can't cope with heavy labour. There is something for everyone to do. Contact Keith Kendall (see contacts list). He would love to hear from you.

Also can any Task Team members give us the lowdown on being a member? We would like to hear from you.

Please contact Margaret Sanderson.

River Poems from the Past

The Meeting of Waters

There is not in the world a valley so sweet,
As the vale in whose bosom the bright waters meet.

Thomas Moore 1779 – 1852

The Brook

I chatter, chatter, as I flow
To join the brimming river,
For men may come, and men may go,
But I go on forever.

Alfred Tennyson 1809 - 1892

An Announcement

From January 2016, I will not be doing RVCG membership. I have had this job since our beginnings over 20 years ago. In your New Year newsletter next January, you will get details of who to send your membership subs to, so please do not send your 2016 renewals until you get this

information. It has been interesting to get to know many of you but I will continue to be a committee member and do the newsletters so please send your Rivelin stories to me.

When you send your subs by post in the New Year, please try not to put coins in the envelope as it can tear and scatter the coins when the postman tries to push them through our modern, rather stiff letter boxes!

Margaret Sanderson

Information Wanted

Crosspool Tavern has existed for many years but the present building is relatively new. A painting of the old tavern exists that seems to be early 20th century. The men are in flat caps and the lady on the painting has long skirts and an apron. The tavern stands in the middle of a row of cottages. The artist's name is unreadable, possibly Elliot. The old pub would have been popular in the days when the road was a packhorse route. It is said that the mounds of earth, now grassed over at the junction of Manchester Rd and Lydgate Lane are due to the rubble of the old cottages and pub. Does anyone know if this is right? These mounds have always been a draw for little children to roly-poly down on their way home from school.

Does anyone know more about the old Tavern? Please contact Margaret Sanderson

Some Recent RVCG Events

Summer Garden Party

16th August 2015

Once more, we all were in Ken's lovely garden that was just made for our annual event. It was delayed for a fortnight as the original day was cancelled because of bad weather. Keith cooked the burgers and Joan and I spent a morning making ham, cheese, cucumber and potted meat sandwiches, also preparing salads etc. Drinks were organised by Graham and there must have been a small army erecting the marquee. The weather was fine.

Our first summer parties were on the RVCG allotment site (now gone) but Ken's garden is now the perfect venue and we thank him

for lending us his garden and providing a cup of tea for everyone.

OPEN EVENING
History of Sheffield Castle
8th September 2015
Lloyd Powell

Lloyd narrated his story without notes which was quite a feat for anyone to attempt. His research took many years. This meeting turned out to be the story of two Sheffield castles. The first one was a motte and bailey type made on raised ground with a wooden stockade and a moat around it. This was pre Norman Conquest in the days of the ill fated Earl Waltheof whose rebellion against William the Conqueror ended up with his head chopped off.

Most castles have been surveyed but not this early Sheffield one because it has now disappeared and the site built over. It would have been similar to the one discovered in Bradfield by aerial survey. Later, Sheffield became the home of the Furnivals and Lovetots and their castle was of the traditional type built of stone. Mary Queen of Scots was once imprisoned here for a short time before having her head chopped off by Elizabeth 1st. She was very well treated when here, having servants and visitors. Also she was allowed her own priests and said mass in English, not the more usual Latin.

This castle has now disappeared owing to the development of Sheffield but a reminder lived on as it became the site of the now disappeared Castle Market. In the English Civil War this castle was under siege. The armour, swords and arrows of the soldiers guarding the castle were made in Sheffield. The arrow symbol has lived on in the Sheffield Coat of Arms.

Margaret Sanderson

Please join us at our Open Meetings in Stephen Hill Church, Benty Lane. Bring a friend – they don't have to be members. Have a cup of tea and biscuit with us afterwards.

TREES

When you take a visitor to Carver Fields and to Den Bank Edge, they are amazed at the view of Rivelin Valley opening up in front of them. This area also contains many trees. Here are some of them.

Hawthorn

This is a member of the rose family and well known for hedging, giving a prickly barrier for cattle and cheaper than fencing. An old superstition said that destroying it would bring bad happenings, perhaps because of its association with the crown of thorns.

Oak

The oaks found here were sessile oaks. (They have stalked leaves but the English Oak leaves have no stalks.) It makes good fires and charcoal also once used for tanning leather.

Whitebeam

The leaves are white underneath and shimmer in the wind. It was used for the cogs in mills. Perhaps this is why several whitebeams are found in the valley. As it does not grow very tall, it is used in streets. The word "beam" is Anglo Saxon for tree.

Mountain Ash (Rowan)

This is a hardy tree growing up mountains where other trees don't flourish and can be seen growing in the cracks of rocks. It is the tree of Thor, the god of thunder and Highland crofters planted it to ward off witches. Birds love its fruits and the seeds pass whole straight through them. This helps germination.

Field Maple

Maples are in the sycamore family. It is useful for small bowls and veneers, also used by Stradivarius in his violin making.

Holly

Holly is easily recognised for its use as Christmas decoration. This is another tree thought to ward off witches, also associated with the crucifixion and the crown of thorns. In past times its juice was used to treat jaundice.

Lime

This was favoured by the wood carver Grinling Gibbons. Its stringy inner bark was once used for mats and rope. The famous German Street "Unter den Linden" is lined

with them. However, lime trees are not favoured by motorists who park underneath in flowering time as the flowers drip sticky honeydew.

Laurel

A very sturdy tree when fully grown, related to bay, good for shady places and polluted areas but rather boring.

Yew

This thrives in sun and shade and can be used for topiary. All parts are poisonous. It was said to shelter the first Christians in Britain and is found in many old churchyards. A yew in Fortingale churchyard Scotland is said to be 2,000 years old. In Lord Bathurst's Park in Cirencester there is a hedge thought to be the tallest in Britain.

Longbows made from yew were used at the Battle of Agincourt.

Sycamore

This belongs to the Maple family. It loves disturbed ground such as building and bomb sites. Children like the seeds because of the helicopter twirls when thrown in the air. You have to split the double seeds to do this. Sycamore is also used in violin making. It survives in sun, shade, pollution, high winds and the salty atmosphere of the seaside.

Silver Birch

Coleridge called it "The Lady of the Woods". This is an elegant tree noted for its white peeling bark. It is very hardy and like the rowan, can grow high up mountains. The male, pollen covered catkins are one of the first signs of spring. It also has the dubious reputation for once being used to "birch" boys by police or prison staff. This tradition continued in the Isle of Man until January 1976. This island has its own laws and Parliament but the UK is responsible for its defence.

Elder

The berries are now ripe but does anyone still make elderberry wine? This is quite a potent brew. It is said to be good for colds. Pea shooters from are made from its branches by small children. However, its seeds, in large quantities are poisonous.

Hazel

Well known for its nuts but none were on this tree. Perhaps squirrels got to them

first. Hazel makes a small bushy tree, used in basketry and Welsh coracles. It is sacred to Thor and used for divining rods. Swedes once thought that hazelnuts made you invisible!

Margaret Sanderson

The Recorder

We are now past the Autumnal equinox and there is a definite change in the weather. Believe it or not this year is set to be the warmest yet worldwide and El Nino in the Pacific is likely to lead to more extremes of weather. It has also been a good year for spiders. We have the usual large house spider (Fred) *Eratigena atrica* (= *Tegenaria gigantea*) which we see scurrying about from time to time, but this year we have also had a different type with very long legs and a long thin body, which makes an untidy web under the kitchen units. There are several little spiders in the corners of the lid of my black bin again. They are *Enoplognatha ovata* and are easily recognised by the blue/grey eggsac that they are guarding. I am always concerned that they will be killed when the bin is emptied but they manage to survive. This is a new habitat that you do not see in the nature books!

I managed to raise 65 little frogs this year but I think the foxes are catching some as they are often active round the pond.

Yet again I have not seen a hedgehog which is very worrying. The British Hedgehog Society (www.hedgehogstreet.org) want to know if you have seen a hedgehog, dead or alive, so they can record it on The BIG Hedgehog Map. They recommend that people with garden fences create a small hole the size of a CD case so that hedgehogs can move around – they can travel about a mile each night in search of food or a mate.

I have had a greenhouse for three years now and this year I had an infestation of caterpillars on my tomato plants. They were very pretty with a yellow

line down the side. I discovered they were caterpillars of the Bright-line Brown Eye Moth, which are sometimes a pest on tomatoes. As they also ate dandelions and plantain they were quickly put on these, and I saved my crop, but I shall have to be on the lookout for them next year.

On a warm, sunny day at the beginning of September I saw a juvenile Field Mouse virtually hopping along our drive. It was following a brown grasshopper, *Omocestus viridulus*, that I nearly missed, as it was the same colour as the paving stones. The mouse should have been able to catch the grasshopper easily, so I knew something was not right. I put it into the borders but found it dead on the drive the next day with no visible signs of damage. There was also another dead one not far away.

Did anyone witness the 'flying ant day'? Graham had them on his patio and planters on the 2nd August. These were probably *Lasius niger*, the Black Garden Ant, which does not sting. When the conditions are right, usually a still, warm, dry day, a huge number of winged ants leave the nests for a mating flight. These are the new queens and males which are nearly twice as big as the workers. When the queens have mated they shed their wings and look for a suitable nesting site. This could be in the same nest or a new one. The males die within a few days whether or not they have mated. These flights are a food bonanza for birds. A couple of years ago I was looking out of the bedroom window and thought water was running down the drive. It was, in fact, the silvery shimmer of hundreds of pairs of wings as the ants emerged from the paving stones. Lots of sparrows were picking them off as quickly as they could. This phenomenon usually only lasts one day so do not get out the insect spray, just watch and admire and have the barbecue another day.

Things to look out for:- you could still see swallows and martins going south; butterflies can still be seen in October if the

weather is mild; Hawthorn Shield Bug, Common Green and Forest Bugs are around now; and look at the ivy flowers which will be humming with insects. Please send me your records and thank you to the following for doing so:-

Sue Shaw:- Sue is a regular walker/jogger in the valley and keeps her eye on the invasive plants there as well as the wildlife. Pennywort is growing again at Hind Wheel and it has been reported to the authorities. Sue chatted to a fisherman who has been fishing since the 1950's. He sees a Kingfisher about once a month, did not think the trout population had changed much, and thought there were fewer ducklings than in the Loxley or Don which he attributed to too many dogs.

Thank you to Neil Porter who lives in the valley and is involved in various surveys for water and other birds, including the Sheffield Parks Survey. These surveys are important as they let us know what is declining and what is flourishing. He also sent details of his butterfly sightings, from which I note that the Comma butterfly was only seen once. Has anyone else seen a Comma?

Roger Kite S10:- Common Green Shield Bug; 7 spot Ladybird; Female Holly Blue; many garden birds including Nuthatch; and a successful breeding season for his Starlings.

Margaret Sanderson S10:- Among the usual garden birds Margaret has had 3 Jays, 5 Jackdaws, Bullfinch and a Blackbird nesting in the climbing hydrangea on the garage wall. Has anyone else had a nest in the garden? She also had a Ringlet butterfly.

Graham Appleby S10:- 12.8.15 - 'strange twig-like moth on kitchen surface, identified as Variable Smudge (*Ypsolopha ustella*). Perhaps there is an Oak tree near Graham's as this is a Micro-moth that lives in Oak woodland. Graham also has two Rowan trees. Obviously the berries on one taste better as the blackbirds strip it and

leave the other. Perhaps it has more sun on it and the berries are sweeter. 31.8.15
Small flock of Tits visited garden and ate the seeds of the Hebe, Great Orme, another good garden plant for the autumn.

Joan Buckland S10:- I have had plenty of Small and Large Cabbage White butterflies as my cabbages testify; regular visits by Gatekeepers (4 on 6.8.15) and Speckled Wood. The best day was 6.9.15 with 2 Small Tortoiseshell, 1 Painted Lady, 1 Red Admiral and 1 Small Cabbage White. The bird feeders are quite busy as birds come back into the garden from their August moult. I have two Robins vying for the territory – one has learnt to eat from the feeders and the fatballs. I saw 15-20 Swallows/Martins heading south on the 15.9.15 but there is still time to see more stragglers.

Joan Buckland
30.9.15

I also found the Bright-line Brown Eye Moth on my tomato plants this year for the first time. I only found them by looking closely after being made aware of them by Joan Buckland. I had dismissed little holes in the leaves as being caused by snails but the caterpillar dropping were a bit of a giveaway.

Graham Appleby

