



# Newsletter



Rivelin Valley Conservation Group

**Winter 2016 no 97**

## **Through The Chair**

The British are well known for their regular conversations about the weather but every year we seem to be breaking new records. Perhaps we should start building some of our more vulnerable houses on stilts and try growing rice. I did actually see a programme where a brick house was raised about a metre using hydraulic jacks to avoid future floods. I may live high up on the Valley side but I have not escaped scot-free. There is the rather worrying emergence of a stream in the middle of my lawn and I am undecided whether to hide it with an expensive drainage system or turn it into a feature.

I'm starting to get excited about the RVCG's 25 year celebrations beginning with the AGM in April. See the programme and insert for details and if you haven't experienced S10 Butchers pies then come along and you will be in for a treat. This is a really momentous occasion that will make us the envy of many other voluntary organisations and something we can all be very proud of. The strength of the group is in its huge voluntary support of some 80+ that assist in the overall function of the RVCG and a very professional committee who, I find hard to believe, don't get paid for their contributions.

Our new mill markers are selling well at £200 a post and we have almost sold our first print of 1000 'Walking the Rivelin' books. We had an interesting year in 2015 celebrating the life of John Ruskin, headed up by Professor Chris Baines who announced himself as a local lad from Walkley and Stannington and who gave us an excellent talk at the November Open Meeting. We are planning some interesting events for our 25<sup>th</sup> year which I hope you will try and support and I would love to hear your comments about the history of the RVCG or suggestions for its future. Thank you for your continued support.

Graham Appleby  
RVCG Chairman

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## **Donations**

Many thanks to the following for their donations-

Farrar, Hall, Ollin. Place. Robson, Brash, Coombes, Eyre, Goodwin, Elliot and Goulding. Your donations together with membership subs have reached nearly £2000 this year. Without it RVCG could not do its work in the valley. Is there any other similar local group that is so generous?

Many thanks also to everyone who helps in the printing, sorting out the delivery list and trek around the area to deliver this newsletter to you.

One elderly lady told me how she enjoys delivering this newsletter and has got to know several people in her area that she didn't know before so it's nice to know that we are providing a social contact as well.

Keith Kendall would like you to know that all donations this year will help with the cost of installing the marker posts along the valley.

## **Membership**

Just a reminder that Christine and Graham Roe will be processing your membership applications this year as reflected on the renewal form and they will also produce the newsletter distribution data which was previously managed separately. Thank you to Margaret Sanderson who has meticulously taken care of the membership for the past 25 years and has been a real stalwart in this key function for the group. Margaret will continue as chief editor of the newsletter and as the next one will be our 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary edition, Margaret would love to hear from you.

## Task Team News

### Sunday 3rd January 2016

Because we don't have a Task Day in December, we throw one in early January just to ease people back into it and get some much needed fresh air.

I wanted to walk the valley clearing all the goys and inlets but due to the amount of rain we have had, there was far too much water in the river to be able to do this with any amount of safety.

With bad weather once again forecast for our start time I decided to just get the small team expected to clear all the rubbish from the car park and did a good job on the tunnel before the heavens opened and we decided to call it an early day.

Well done and thank you to all who turned out. It was great to see you all and welcome to Scott. This was his first time out with us. I hope to see you all to help install another five posts at the end of the month.

Also congratulations to our three prize winners from Wood Lane Christmas Fair – Mrs Joseph, Mr Godber, D Palmer. All claimed and delivered. Thank you.

Keith Kendall

If you would like to join the Task Team – all welcome. Please contact Keith. There are jobs for everybody and you don't need to be a navvy – see Contacts List.

### Britain's Oldest Yew

In the last newsletter, there was a piece about trees on Carver Fields and the Fortingale yew tree was mentioned as being believed to be the oldest yew in Britain at 2000 years old. A recent article in The Guardian now says that it is possibly 5,000 years old though it is difficult to guess the true age because the oldest parts have decayed. Female yews produce the red berries but this tree is a male.

A representative of the Royal Botanic Garden of Edinburgh recently found that this male tree had produced three female berries. But he says male conifers such as the yew have been known to change sex and become sexually ambiguous. He has picked some of the berries and hopes that they will germinate and so produce its first identifiable offspring in thousands of years. Will anyone find out if the Carver Fields yew will last that long?

Margaret Sanderson

### When did you last see a hedgehog?

It is said that hedgehogs are now in short supply. A possible cause is the use of toxic pellets to kill slugs, the hedgehog's favourite food but you can buy hedgehog friendly pellets. Also blamed is the prevalence of solid walls or fences to divide gardens and the lack of hedges as hedgehogs like to roam there on their nightly ambles. I have not seen one in my garden for several years. This is because badgers like to eat them. They are adept at opening them up even when curled up in a defensive ball. This certainly happened in my garden and I found two inside out hedgehog skins several years ago in my garden.

Foxes are also said to be able to get into hedgehogs but can only do this if they run one into a pond where they would drown and so opening up, leaving its soft underbelly undefended.

Years ago, two baby hedgehogs with their mother also appeared in my garden one morning in daylight and upon enquiring from the Hedgehog Protection Society, I was told that they needed a lot of food when newborn to fatten up for hibernation and so feed all day. I found their nest in an outside cubby hole and it was an untidy mess of dried up leaves and grass.

Do you have hedgehogs in your garden? We would like to know.

M Sanderson

### Some Recent Events

#### Tuesday October 13<sup>th</sup> 2015

##### The Great Pyramid Peter Bradshaw

This was a journey to Never Never Land via Enid Blyton. Among the strange facts divulged in this talk were the following - "God built the Great Pyramid" and "Everything in the great pyramid foretells the wickedness of man" Well done to our very patient audience who remained polite throughout? "Nuff said".

#### Tuesday 10th November 2015

##### Rivelin in my Veins Chris Baines

We had a full house for this enjoyable meeting at Stephen Hill. You might remember that Chris wrote an article for us in a previous newsletter. At the age of three, Chris and his family moved to Stannington and though now living away from Sheffield, he remembers it clearly and visits when he can.

At this time Stannington and many of its fields are now housing. This area was once part of the old West Riding. (Where have our ridings gone? We want them back.)

He remembers Rivelin Valley well.

This was a time when children were allowed to

roam free all day without their parents worrying. They could run up and down the fields and get to know the countryside. The river and ponds were a draw for paddling and catching minnows and tadpoles.

He agrees that children need an element of risk and to be engaged with wildlife.

Often they don't know the names of wild flowers and trees.

When aged 14 Chris started a petition to restore the pack horse bridge.

He is a firm believer that we need natural areas in our cities and praises Ken Livingstone for fighting to save a wet area near Kings Cross Station because of its newts.

### **Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> November 2015**

#### **Christmas Fayre at Wood Lane Farm**

Once more Wood Lane hosted this popular event. There were lots of stalls selling a variety of items from hand turned wooden bowls to jewellery, books, children's toys and foods. All useful for buying Christmas presents.

Sue's RVCG stall was selling our Rivelin book and information on membership. Joan Buckland and I had a stall where children could make Christmas cards. There was a steady procession of customers with little children.

Unfortunately a wind was blowing or more like a gale of the kind the Shipping Forecast sends dire warnings to deep sea fisherman.

The marquees were flapping uncontrollably and at one point it seemed that they were about to take off. Was this why Keith was clutching a supporting pole? To make it worse, we had frozen feet with the cold coming up from the wet grass underneath.

However, the customers kept coming as they wandered around this Aladdin's Cave with their children.

Soon the "powers that be" decided that enough was enough and we were ushered out in an orderly fashion.

Many of us headed for firmly grounded stone built farmhouse from where we watched one marquee frantically wobbling and near collapse. Fortunately the house had other attractions including food. If you visit this event another year do try their homity pie, a recipe from heaven (Crank's Cookery book).

We watched in safety from a window as the marquees continued defying gravity and we listened to some excellent folk music from a trio.

Well done to the clearer-uppers (one was Keith) and those who ensured our safety. We will be back.

Margaret Sanderson

### **Wanted**

We would like to read your Rivelin stories in this newsletter. We know you enjoy and use the valley or perhaps can't get down there anymore but like to hear what's going on. We would love to hear from you.

Thank you to the Valleyside Garden Centre for their support of the RVCG

## The Recorder

Christmas and New Year have come and gone, but it certainly does not feel like winter. December was the warmest and wettest since 1910. Many people have, yet again, suffered from flooding and there is more rain to come. We have only had a handful of mornings when the ground was white with frost. El Nino and the Jet Stream are still having an effect. Slugs and a few caterpillars are still active. I had two frogs croaking on the 8<sup>th</sup> December and wasps on the ivy flowers on the 18<sup>th</sup> December. My Calendula flowers are looking good and my wild strawberries and Lungwort (*Pulmonaria officinalis*) are in flower. Let me know what plants are still flowering in your gardens. The birds are having it fairly easy apart from getting regular drenches. This can be bad in cold weather but they can recover in mild weather.

My two Robins have been following each other for weeks now and seem to be getting on well. Robins pair up early and this may be the case here. With the weather being so mild they may be the same pair I had last year. Most birds have a very short life. Over half of adult robins still alive after nesting will be dead within the next year. Their young have an even shorter life expectancy. This information has been gained from studying ringed wild birds and captive birds, which usually live longer lives. There are rare records of a ringed Robin living for 13 years, and a Blackbird and Starling for 20. So appreciate your Robin and Blackbird singing their hearts out, it will probably be a different bird next year. The weather has also been mild in Scandinavia (up until this week when they have had snow and -27°C in the north of Sweden). This probably explains why we have not seen many Fieldfares, Redwings and Waxwings yet, but this may change soon. Let me know if you see any.

I am always concerned for our animals and plants when the winter is mild.

There is the possibility of a late cold spell which can kill early shoots and cause chaos with mating and nesting. Creatures think Spring is on the way and then are cruelly cut down. A cold spell is forecast for next week so let us hope it is a short-lived one. Please remember to keep the bird feeders topped up.

Things to look out for:- Winter visitors, first sighting of frog spawn, and now the leaves have dropped can you see any birds' nests in your garden.

Thank you to all who send in their records:-

Richard Jenkins S6 – 4.8.15 – Water Vole swimming downstream from near the Café. This is exciting and more records would be welcome.

Margaret Sanderson S10 – Sept. – Buzzard flying north over Rivelin Valley. 5.10.15 – Reed Bunting on seed feeder. BTO consulted for identification.

Vivian Falshaw S10 – 28.9.15 – First sighting of a Nuthatch in her garden. Neil Porter S6 – 19.10.15 – Comma butterfly in garden; 20.10.15 – Red Admiral butterfly, and Kingfisher on Wolf pond.

Freya Harris S10 – Jays, Blue and Great Tits, Jackdaws, Sparrows, Robins and nesting Blackbirds, and a Sparrow Hawk feeding on a Pigeon in her garden. She also saw bats from July – September. It will be interesting to see if the disruption caused by the house building at Moor View Farm impacts on the number of bats seen.

Doreen Best S10 - 10.12.15 – Barn Owl seen quartering fields on both sides of A57 below Coppice Farm at 3.15 pm.

Sue Shaw S6 – Regular walker in the valley – highlights from Sept to Dec. Tawny Owl calling, Buzzard cruising over garden, Jays, Grey Wagtail, Robins, Wrens, Mistle Thrush, Kestrel, 'our' Heron, and a Great Spotted Woodpecker in trees below garden.

David Mason S10 – 8.10.15 – Hummingbird Hawk Moth – anyone else seen one this year?

Roger Kite S10 – 4.11.15 – Brambling.  
Sightings of Pink-footed Geese

Thank you to Roger Kite, David Lyon, Bob and Margaret Townrow and Joan Buckland.  
8.10.15 – 9.30am about 250 noisily going NE;  
12.10.15 – 11.30am 200 + going NE;  
17.10.15 – 10am 200-250 noisily going NE;  
30.10.15 – 3.25pm 200 + going NE;  
2.11.15 – 11am 100 going E; 29.12.15 – 4pm 100+ noisily going NW.  
These geese move around looking for food.

Joan Buckland S10 – Highlights -  
18/26.10.15 – Nuthatch; occasional calling of female and male Tawny Owl; 29.10.15 – Magpie chasing female Sparrow Hawk through garden; 10.11.15 – bee on fuchsia (16.1deg. that day); 26.11.15 – 10 magpies; 2.12.15 – Goldcrest; 15.12.15 – 9 Siskin.

Joan Buckland  
7.1.16

### **Rivelin Valley Trees**

The Sheffield City Council has a city wide 25 year plan to maintain the city's many trees using the contractor Amey. The RVCG is fully aware of the plans for tree work in and around the Rivelin Valley. Sheffield has been starved of tree maintenance for a number of years and we welcome the new investment for maintaining the trees in our Valley. Rivelin Valley has the second longest lime tree avenue in Britain with some 539 trees and although this has no legal protection we have made sure that Amey are fully aware of the importance of maintaining this for future generations. Removal of decaying limbs and dead or dying trees is necessary for public safety but the RVCG has raised concerns about the

planned removal of so many trees opposite the fire station and adjacent to Rivelin Valley park. We met up with the Amey contractors who explained that the main driver here is to restore a neat curb line in preparation for new pavements. As many of the trees have dislodged the curb stones it is deemed necessary to remove the trees altogether. Although the trees are to be replaced with new young lime trees, this will have a dramatic visual impact on the tree lined road that we feel is unacceptable. We are aware that many of the trees are over 100 years old and will be coming to the end of their lives over the next 50 years and a sensible replacement strategy would be welcomed that did not disrupt the visual aspect of the tree lined Valley too drastically. We have also requested that trees previously removed are also replaced with limes and also to fill in existing spaces particularly at the top end of the Valley towards Rails Road which Amey said they would consider. There are 7 dead or dying trees already earmarked for removal but there are a further 26 to be removed to obtain a neat curb line.

If you want to learn more or want to get involved then there is a group called 'Save Rivelin Valley Trees' who would be pleased to hear from you. The opposition to the tree removal has urged the SCC to defer the felling and to refer its plans to an independent tree panel. We await the outcome.

Graham Appleby