



# Newsletter



Rivelin Valley Conservation Group

**Spring 2016 no 98**

## **Through The Chair**

Welcome to our spring newsletter with the RVCG celebrating its 25th year anniversary. I originally moved to Crosspool in 1985 and although the RVCG began in 1991, I was unaware of its existence until a letter drop invited me to a Sunday task day in upper Hagg Wood around 1996. Since then I have thoroughly enjoyed working with a wonderful group of like-minded volunteers and I have never failed to be impressed by their dedication and enthusiasm. So it was with great pleasure that I was able to chair the RVCG 25<sup>th</sup> Year AGM on April 19<sup>th</sup> at Stephen Hill Church with a full house of ardent supporters although the superb pea and pie supper supplied by S10 Butchers of Broomhill probably also helped boost the attendance.

The RVCG has a fairly stable membership of about 230 households; the equivalent of over 500 members and one of the largest voluntary organisations in Sheffield and beyond. We have around 80 physical volunteers including around 35 task team members, 25 newsletter deliverers and 9 committee members. This is the equivalent of a medium sized business.

We have produced the very popular 'Walking in the Rivelin', the Rivelin Mills video and we have just sold our last Mill marker post which are helping keep the RVCG task team busy.

Therefore I want to thank you all for your continued support and look forward to many more years of conservation challenges in our little corner of England

Graham Appleby  
RVCG Chairman

## **Contacts**

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## **Donations**

Many thanks to the following - your donations and subs are an asset to our group.

Aizlewood, Alesbrook, Allen, Annetts, Ashforth, Axelby, Barrand, Beardshaw, Bennett, Best, Betts, Boddington, Brown, Bradshaw, Brazil, Burnett, Byles, Cooper, Cossham, Cotton, Cousins, Dakin, Dalby, Dean, Emsley, Farrelly, Finch, Fish, Foster, Gladwell, Grace, Hague, Hanson, Higginbottom, Hill(x2), Horsefield, Humphries, Isherwood, Jackman, Keen, Kershaw(x2), Kettleborough, King, Knowles, Lampeter, Large, Lawrence, Leathard, Lee, Leek, Legg, Lewis, Liddell, Lindsey(x2), Mansell, Mason, McDermott, Morrell, Morton, Oakes, Outwin, Owen, Palmer, Pawson, Peak, Peter, Place, Poole, Porter, Purdy, Purshaw, Richards, Robinson, Roe(x2) Rotchell, Rybinski, Sanderson, Saunders, Seaman, Slack, Smith, Sorsby, Tandy, Toseland, Trickey, Turnbull, Upchurch, Walshaw, Ward, White (x2) Whiteley, Wilde, Williams, Wood, Woodhouse – total amount £1,062.

If your name is not here, it is because this newsletter went for printing before your donation arrived. Please renew your subs if you haven't already or this will be your last newsletter.

## **We thank Valleyside Garden Centre Manchester Rd for supporting RVCG**

### **Task Team News**

On Sunday 28th April the team work on part of the nature trail just in front of the Little London Wheel replacing damaged drainage pipes and re-surfacing parts of the footpath. This meant having to wheelbarrow surface material from the car park at Nether cut and everyone knew they had done it at the end of the day with aching arms and shoulders. Well done to all who turned out. It has made a big difference to this part of the trail.

I would like a mention for "THE DON NETWORK" grant to sponsor 4 of the posts this now brings the total posts to 16 and only 4 remaining so if anyone would like to sponsor a post contact us ASAP

Keith Kendall

If you would like to join the Task Team, Keith Kendall would love to hear from you. Please see "Contacts".

### **Some Recent Events**

**Tuesday January 12<sup>th</sup> 2016**

**John Kirkman BTO, Garden Birds – their lives, habits and survival.**

This was an insight into birds we see in gardens or parks.

Bird watching seems to give long life. John recalled, amongst others, Max Nicholson, a civil servant during Churchill's time lived to be 97 and recorded Long Necked Parakeets, seen for the first time in Kensington Gardens.

Carrion crows are on the increase in our area and noisily defend their patch. They look after each other and nibble each other's feathers but also eat other bird's eggs.

Jackdaws are now all over Sheffield and many roost in Ecclesall Woods. They can also nest in your chimney.

Wood pigeons are greedy and the last three years has seen a big increase. It is regarded as a pest. You can hear their coo-coo- cooing, very annoying if they are sitting on your chimney.

The robin has been voted our favourite garden bird. A male robin will not put up with another male in its area. They like to hop around near you when you are digging, watching for a worm to appear.

Magpies are ever present and eat almost everything. Their nest is held together with mud and it is a myth that they hoard jewellery or shiny objects but they do save scraps of food for a time in a hole in the earth.

The kestrel is protected by law and can be seen hovering in our gardens, flapping its wings vigorously, waiting to pounce on a mole or mouse.

Blue tits are commonly seen in gardens on feeding stations. They can produce up to ten chicks but usually only two survive.

Starlings flourish in the Peak District. They can take over other bird's nests but they do not like to nest in PVC bargeboards.

House sparrows have declined 75% over the last five years.

The swift is a migrant bird that appears in April to spend the summer here but after 16 weeks they leave to winter in Africa.

Keep feeding your birds. It is said to very therapeutic to watch them.

John Kirkman will donate his fees for this event to BTO.

M Sanderson

**Tuesday February 9<sup>th</sup> 2016**

**Mike Spick A Sheffield A-Z**

This was a fascinating alphabetical run through of Sheffield landmarks. They would have filled this newsletter if all of them were included.

We started with Abbeydale Industrial Hamlet, the best

preserved crucible steel plant in Sheffield. Here steel of high quality was made for sharp edged tools such as scythes. The dam to supply the water wheel is still there.

We had a photographic trip to the 19<sup>th</sup> century cholera monument, a memorial to the many who died in Sheffield due to the putrid drainage that gathered in cellars (no loos then) you just tipped the mess out into a cess pit at your back door. Then on to Mary Queen of Scots who had a holiday here thanks to Queen Elizabeth 1<sup>st</sup> until she was put out of her misery by having her head chopped off. Then to Paradise Square where John Wesley preached and we finished the Sheffield alphabet by learning that cheaper cutlery handles were made of Xylonite instead of "posh" people's ivory handles and the talk finished with the Zeppelin Raid of Sheffield in 1916 that frightened the population. It was the size of an ocean liner. Its first bomb was dropped on Burngreave Cemetery.

**Tuesday March 8<sup>th</sup> 2016**

**Story of the Snake Rd and Sheffield to Glossop Turnpike Trail**

This was the enlightening story of how these two roads were built. We take our roads for granted but these roads were first built over difficult terrain, without the aid of modern machinery.

Previously goods were transported by canal but Sheffield, a fast growing manufacturing town in the 1800's needed better ways of moving goods, especially to ports for export to the growing American markets.

Trusts were formed to improve existing roads so that wheeled transport could be used. Each trust had a surveyor, clerk and treasurer. Travellers had to pay a toll and the turn pike (a bar) was lifted when payment was made. Hunter's Bar still retains its name from this period.

The roads were 60ft wide with a grass verge on either side so that highway men could not hide. A reminder of this verge remains on Manchester Rd, Crosspool. Surrey Farm and the old Norfolk Arms were once inns to supply the traffic.

M Sanderson

It's always nice to hear from our members. We know that a lot of you have memories of Rivelin. No matter how small, they are all very welcome. Please contact Margaret Sanderson – see contact list.

The following article was sent by a member.

### **Round Trip**

As you take your many walks through Rivelin you will come across a memorial bench whose plaque reads, "Sandra and Don Buttress. Home from Australia 2013".

I would like to tell you a little about Sandra and Don.

They were married and had a lovely daughter, Elizabeth. Their home was the flat above South Road Post Office, where Sandra was the Post Mistress; and Don was a bus driver for Sheffield Transport. In the early 60's they decided to emigrate to Australia and both worked very hard to provide their family the best possible life. Sandra and Don were the New Age pioneers of Australia, moving to give Libby a new and better life, "down under". Their family grew as Libby got married and gave them two wonderful grandchildren: Cara and Nick. Sandra and John never forgot where they came from and over the years returned to Sheffield several times to visit family and friends. On each visit it was a must for them to stroll once again through Rivelin, as they made their way to visit their oldest and dearest friends, Maureen and John.

When they retired, Sandra and John decided to leave the city and spend their retirement quietly by the sea. Sadly and unexpectedly, only a few short years after their retirements, Sandra passed away in September 2012. Tragically, still reeling from his loss, Don passed away only eight months later in May 2013. Don always expressed a wish to be brought "home" to Sheffield when he passed away. Elizabeth (Libby) couldn't bring herself to separate her parents, and after long and difficult consideration, made the painful decision to bring both parents back to Sheffield. Libby and her daughter Cara brought them "home" to Sheffield where we had an emotional and fitting ceremony where they fulfilled Don's wish. Libby and Cara arranged with the RVCG for the memorial bench to be placed in Rivelin which you pass as you stroll through the park.

Now, when Libby, Cara and Nick come to Sheffield continue the tradition of visiting family and friends, they have a reason to visit our lovely Rivelin too. Sandra and Don have truly made a "round trip" and we feel a memorial bench is a fitting tribute to our family's New Age pioneers of Australia.

I often stroll through the Rivelin too, and see all the hard work and dedication of the RVCG to keep our valley in its natural condition. My thanks go to you all on behalf of both my Sheffield and Australian family. Congratulations and best wishes for the forthcoming 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration of the RVCG. I wish you the very best for the future and I am proud to be a member of such a worthy cause.

Mrs Pat Fish and Family

Many thanks to Mrs Fish for her lovely memories and for letting us share them.

This article is what we all like to see and many of you must have some too. Please send them to M Sanderson, no matter how small or large – see contacts list.

### **Here we are in our 25<sup>th</sup> Year, so what were we doing in our beginnings?**

Here are a few snippets from our early newsletters.

Our group recorder wanted Latin names if possible for any botanic species seen.

Five to ten people appeared at Task Days.

Mountain bikes were damaging footpaths.  
(Nothing new there)

On an RVCG walk, around Rivelin we saw a goshawk.  
(Has anyone seen one recently?)

I went on a visit to the Traveller Camp at Lodge Moor.

The warden was handing out plastic bags and the site was pristine. The caravans were spotless and the lady I visited was grateful for the separate kitchens to cook food so that her caravan was always free of smells. A member saw a motorist dumping rubbish on Long Lane and took the car number. The local police made the person remove it.

We had a fungus walk with Patrick Harding. Fungi are neither plants nor animals and fall in a class of their own. We were reminded that your pint of beer or slice of bread depend on fungus. Of course you do not want another form of fungus – athlete's foot.

On a bat walk we saw a Daubenton's bat. It needs to catch 2,000 midges a night to survive.

Our subscription was £1 a year. We are still not overpriced.

Himalayan Balsam was a nuisance – nothing new there.

### **Butterflies**

The small copper butterfly had its worst year yet last year. Butterflies once common are going into decline says Tom Brereton of Butterfly Conservation. Last year was the worst since records began 40 years ago. The once common peacock and small tortoiseshell are struggling.

**Please remember to send this summer's reports to Joan Buckland**

## The Recorder

I am writing this on the 4<sup>th</sup> April and the month has started with the traditional sunshine and showers, which is strangely reassuring in view of the uncharacteristic weather of the last few months. The ground is still very wet but everywhere is beginning to look greener as the days lengthen. The dawn chorus and evensong are sounding richer and the birds are displaying and mating in the garden. The Sparrow was first in the RSPB Garden Birdwatch, in 62% of gardens, with the Blackbird second, although their numbers have declined since the first Birdwatch in 1979. The sparrows are particularly noisy now with their 'sparrow parties'. This is when a group of males chases a female with the intent of mating. She may already have a mate and he spends his time trying to protect her. This does not always work and she may also lay eggs fertilised by other males, but her partner will help raise them. DNA studies have found that this happens quite often with many birds, including Blue Tits, Swallows, Starling and Dunnock, where nestlings from two or even three different fathers have been found. If you have three Dunnock in your garden regularly there will probably be two males and one female, and she will most likely mate with both of them. Both males will help rear the nestlings. The male birds want to have as many offspring as possible (polygyny) and the females go for quality (polyandry). However Jackdaws mate for life and are only parted by death.

Many people have reported flowers in bloom over the winter, and people were mowing their lawns in February. The damp weather has suited the Celandine which has brightened up the hedgerows. The wet, mild weather has also suited the frogs and there are lots of reports of frogspawn. The earliest so far is from Sally Turnbull whose frogspawn arrived on the 22<sup>nd</sup> February and the tadpoles emerged on the 27<sup>th</sup>. Her pond is in a sunny position which makes a big difference.

The summer migrants will be winging their way here, and swallows have already been seen in various parts of the country, including Yorkshire.

Solitary bees are searching for nesting sites and there are more insects around. Soon the Spring butterflies will bring more colour to the gardens and countryside.

On a more solemn note Ash dieback disease (*Chalara fraxinea*) is a big problem. If you see a tree with the leaves dying from the tip please report it straight away to [www.forestry.gov.uk/chalara](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/chalara).

Thank you to all who have sent in records.

Janet Lee S10 – Janet lives near the golf course and many birds visit her feeders – Blue Tits, Blackcaps, Sparrows, Robins, Blackbird, Starlings, crows, Jackdaws, Goldfinch in summer. A Sparrowhawk flies through regularly in the evening hoping to catch its supper.

Doreen Best – 1pm -14.2.16 – Kingfisher flying across Wolf Dam and then a few minutes later flying across Frank Wheel Dam. Also says 'weird weather – our wild cherry tree is in full blossom'.

Julie Winslow – 10.34am 17.2.16 – Saw a female deer (Roe?) walking up through the trees off Hagg Hill towards the alpaca field. States 'definitely not an alpaca'.

Anne Ward S35 – Feb.2016 – Has had a Coal Tit in nesting box from October – it could get ousted by a Great Tit which is bigger. Let us know Anne. Anne also has the following flowers in bloom – snowdrops, iris, calendula, wallflowers, white cyclamen, grape hyacinth, pieris, mahonia, bergenia and hellebores. What a picture!

Kath Finch S6 – 10.2.16 – Small Tortoiseshell on outside of conservatory window in mid-December. Also still has pinks and ground cover rose bushes in flower.

Karen Austin - early February 2016 – Barn Owl spotted flying across Rails Road, near Rivelin Road at dusk. It flew into a field and she watched it hunting. – Magical!

Margery Beck S6 – Margery is wondering where her usual Sparrows went this winter. Maybe they had plenty of food in the fields that her house backs on to. Hopefully things will improve this year. I shall tell some of mine there is a garden full of feeders waiting for them on the other side of the valley.

Neil Porter S6 - Neil has many birds visiting his Rivelin Valley garden including Goldcrest, Long-tailed Tits, Bullfinch, Nuthatch, Siskin and Great Spotted Woodpecker (daily). Also 27.1.16 – Barn Owl off Lodge Lane; 21.2.16 – 44 Redwing in Coppice Farm field; 25.2.16 -Dipper by Wolf Wheel weir; several sightings of a Buzzard; 29.2.16 – 27 Curlew with 50 Lapwing in fields west of Rails Road; 1.3.16 – 30 and 2.3.16 – 40 Curlew

Gillian Drinkwater S10 – 11.3.16 (9am) - very noisy line of 26 Swans going due North from Crosspool. Probably Whoopers gradually making their way back

to Iceland to breed.

Dan Briggs S6 – 29.2.16 (midnight) – saw two small deer crossing the Rivelin Valley road near the S bend towards Den Bank. These could have been Muntjac as Dan thought they were foxes at first.

Jonathan Ball S6 – 23.2.16 – In only 45 minutes in the beautiful Rivelin valley saw 1 Mistle Thrush, 1 Grey Wagtail, 1 Nuthatch, 1 Treecreeper, 1 Goldcrest and a Kingfisher. Very lucky! Also on the 29.2.16 - 3 Treecreepers, Grey Wagtail, 10 – 12 Long-tailed Tits, Heron and Kingfisher. Not bad either!

Phil Reid S6 – 5.2.16 – Sparrowhawk; 16.2.16 – Heron, Treecreeper and two Woodpeckers; 26.2.16 – pair of Siskin.

Sue Shaw S6 – Among Sue's many records - 29.12.15, 28.2.16 – Tawny Owl calling near Walkley Bank; 29.12.15 – 10 Sparrows Walkley Bank garden; 19.1.16 – 35 Mallard Havelock dam; 26.1.16 – Song Thrush; 26.2.16 – 2 Dippers between dam and stepping stones Walkley Bank Tilt.

Margaret Sanderson S10 – 9.2.16 – flock of Geese (Pink Footed?) flying east over valley early morning; 22.2.16 – 10 Long-tailed Tits in tree; 8.2.16 – 3 very noisy squirrels chasing each other.

Graham Appleby – March – Great Spotted Woodpecker around Upper Hagg Woods; 3.4.16 - 8/9 male Mallard on Rivelin Mill Pond and a few male Mallard on Wolfe Wheel dam. Graham wonders where the females are. Well, the males have done their job and the females do the rest, i.e. nest building, egg laying and bringing up the chicks!

Joan Buckland  
4.4.2016

Chairmans notes:

We have seen a real mixed bag of weather variations throughout Spring which will no doubt bring mixed blessings for our flora and fauna. I have a number of 'Blue Tit' boxes under the eaves of my house which faces North and so maybe not the most attractive nesting site but there has recently been a real avid interest from a flock of sparrows. One box has a camera which has never been selected as a nest site and I was extremely hopeful this year having seen sparrows flitting in and out. Therefore I connected up the camera but alas the box is still empty. I was pleased to see up to five starlings in my garden recently.

The varying weather can also be a problem for bees. Honey bees form a ball around the queen in cold

weather and vibrate their muscles to create heat at around 20C without the presence of brood and around 30C with brood using a minimum of honey stores. But sporadic increases in temperature can tempt the bees to break bond and venture out to farm nectar and pollen that is in very short supply. Unfortunately the bees begin to use more energy and so use more of their stores and unless the beekeeper has provided enough winter supplies in the form of honey or fondant then bees can easily starve. I went on holiday for 3 weeks early march only to return to find all my bees dead. Not from starvation as they were still in a ball and I don't know the reason as bees are normally very resilient. So if you see any honey bee swarms this summer, please give me a call and I can try and catch them and hive them.

Graham Appleby  
07850712988