



Newsletter

Rivelin Valley Conservation Group

Autumn 2019 no 112

Through The Chair

Welcome to the RVCG Autumn newsletter. During the Summer we saw our last task day fall a week early on the 21st July when we completed our work at Roscoe Bridge after three hard working task days. We had a break in August and the September task day was rained off.

The RVCG Garden Party at the end of July was thoroughly enjoyable and we also took the opportunity to show off our new gazebo and tables provided through our SLLP grant. Entertainment was again provided by Bob and Margaret Townrow followed by myself on acoustic guitar and a friend Jonny Gee on drums. We all played a rendition of Sloop John B which we all know as a Beach Boys classic but was actually originally published by Richard Le Gallienne in 1916 as "The John B. Sails" and is a Bahamian folk song from Nassau. Thank you again to Ken Shail for hosting the event.

For me, I always feel the RVCG new year begins in September as I spend time in the Summer planning for the next 12 months. We began in September when Margaret Jackson came to talk to us about the Rotherham Chapel on the Bridge. January's open meeting will be about the history of surnames with Roy Yates which will be chaired by Roger Kite as I am away the whole of January. Keith Kendall will be taking care of the task team in my absence. Thank you to everyone for your considerable support during the course of 2019 and best wishes to you all for Xmas and the New Year.

Graham Appleby
RVCG Chairman

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The use of grass verges?

Plantlife, the wildlife charity recommend that grass verges could become a wildlife habitat. This can be achieved by cutting the grass just twice a year and only after flowers have seeded. You can find out more about their campaign on-line.

97% of our wildflower meadows have been lost over the last century and verges could help provide a replacement habitat.

Phil Sterling of *Butterfly Conservation* says that grass verges can act as wildlife corridors which can support butterflies, moths and insects as well as wild flowers.

Good news

The small blue butterfly has been found in Norfolk for the first time since 1910. It has also been seen in Suffolk, Essex and Cambridge. Its caterpillars like Kidney Vech which is its sole food plant. Let's hope it moves further north.

RVCG Open meeting *10 September 2019*

The Rotherham Chapel on the Bridge – a book by Margaret Jackson

The chapel was first mentioned in the will of John Bokying in 1483. He was the master of the local grammar school and left 3 shillings and 4 pence for the 'fabric of the chapel' to be built on Rotherham Bridge. It is thought that the Archbishop of York also donated money.

Travellers visited the chapel to pray for God's blessing on their journey and for a safe return. The chapel depended on their offerings.

After the Dissolution of the Monasteries in 1537 the chapel continued its services until 1547 when it closed because of the 'Act of Dissolution of Colleges and Chantries'.

In 1569 it became an alms house for the 'poor and disabled' and in 1637 £15 pounds was spent on clothing.

In 1775 alterations were made to allow it to become the town jail. Living accommodation was provided for the deputy constable and cells for prisoners at a cost of £36

This is just a small part of the complicated history of the chapel and more can be found in Margaret's book.

Glyphosate

Germany has announced that glyphosate (sold under the brand name *Roundup*) will be banned because it may have harmful effects on insects that play a vital role in pollinating food crops. Austria agreed to forbid glyphosate in July this year.

**Thank you to Valleyside
Garden Centre for their
continued support**

Welsh poppies (Meconopsis Cambria)

These poppies sprung into life in rocky and wooded places after the glaciers retreated. They now grow in most places and are good for wildlife because many insects such as bumble bees and hover flies like them. They can grow anywhere including in cracks in pavements and crevices in walls. Some gardeners like them and others don't. But they do provide a splash of colour and you can always remove a dying flower so that it won't seed.

Your memories?

We love to publish stories about the valley. If you have a story you would like to share, please do contact the editor. Here are some ideas:

The King Edward VII Orthopaedic Hospital on Rivelin Valley Road closed in 1992 and was converted into housing. Do you have memories of having worked there or of having been a patient?

Have you worked on a farm in the valley?

Was the valley your playground when you were young. Did you play football on the top field on Hagg Lane? Did you sledge down the long field below the edge? Do you remember when the Carver Fields tennis courts were in use?

Have you played with the Loxley Brass Band?

Stannington Church Bells

Do the good people of Stannington know that we can sometimes hear your church bells over in Crosspool? It must be when the wind is in the right direction. Keep ringing!

Donations

We have received £87 in donations so far this year. Many thanks!

Stannington School Timetable - 1848

Back in 1997 we published an extract from Stannington's school timetable of 1848. Does it feel very different?

9am	school opens, prayer and religious instruction
10am	writing and arithmetic
10.45am	exercise and open air
11am	reading and spelling
12 noon	dismiss
1.30pm	an object lesson on natural history, geography or other subject
2.15pm	writing and arithmetic
3pm	exercise
3.15pm	reading and spelling
4pm	dismiss with a prayer

That's quite a long lunch break!

Action For Stannington



I received a letter recently to say that Danny Piermattei would be standing down as Chair of 'Action for Stannington' at the AGM held in October. I was quite saddened by this as the bigger than life Danny was a major force in keeping Stannington spic and span and occasionally joined forces with the RVCG on our annual litter pick. Danny is to spend more time taking care of his aging parents and will hand over the reins to the new interim Chair, Jenny Van Tinteran, over the next 6 months. A few seasoned committee members also stood down at the same AGM and inevitably Action for Stannington are looking for new volunteers to join the committee and to join their task team.

Katie Lukey is a task team leader and the organisation contact on 07794842993 lukeywood@hotmail.com
The RVCG sends its best wishes to Danny.



England's contribution to European Heritage Open Days began in 1994 with the aim of throwing open the doors to historic monuments and buildings; normally closed to the public. The RVCG ran a successful event back in 2014 and again this year on September 22nd. Well what a day! The weather had broken after a dry period and we were deluged. However, we were fortunate to have access to Mousehole Forge to which we organised four guided walks that were fully booked and almost everyone turned up despite the rain.



Mousehole Forge - in front of the East Hammer

Fay Musselwhite also led a walk which allowed visitors to read their own poetry at locations along the route and was very well attended.

I would like to thank the 22 volunteers who helped erect and dismantle all the gazebos and helped the event run so successfully. I would also like to thank the following people: Ian and Steve from the Crosspool Forum for providing and helping erect extra gazebos, the Rangers for allowing us to use their rest room and to Sue Shaw helping me dry out the gazebos the following day! It looked like the aftermath of Glastonbury!

RVCG Task Team

The July task day saw the task team complete the footpath topping at Roscoe Bridge. Council contractors are now tasked with upgrading the main footpath between Rivelin Park and Roscoe Bridge which is in a poor state of repair with slippery muddy areas and many trip hazards. However, there is a two-year window for this and several other projects and so we are not sure when it will be completed. The Task Team also took the opportunity to provide steps down to the river edge leading to the Chair Sculpture which is very popular with children.



Before.....



After.....

The crumbling bank is now much safer and easier for the public to access assuming it all didn't get washed away in recent floods!

Graham Appleby

This space is reserved for RVCG planning comments available to members only

THE RECORDER – Autumn 2019

The Recorder

It is wet and misty outside giving me an excuse not to tidy the garden ready for winter. We have had quite a lot of rain since the last week in September and there were many flood warnings in place. On 25th September and 1st October it was particularly bad with record amounts of rain falling. The River Rivelin has overflowed onto the path in some places so if you go down the valley please be very careful. On the 23rd September it had been sunny all day until the rain arrived about 5.30pm and all the frogs in my pond and small containers erupted into song. It had been quite warm and I think they must have thought it was Spring.

Diana Rybinski sent in a lovely photo of a Leopard slug, *Limax maximus*, she had found in her garden. As the name suggests it is a large slug, up to 20 cm in length, and has spots on the head part and usually looks striped on the body. This slug is not harmful in the garden as it feeds on decaying material and is often found in compost heaps. It has a very unusual mating ritual which I have written about in a previous article. I know some people shudder at the thought of slugs but they are not all bad for your plants and they serve a purpose in recycling your compost. I think they are beautiful and amazing creatures.

My Common candy-striped spiders (*Enoplognatha ovata*) have taken up residence on the lid inside my black bin again. They had a year off last year. I worry every time the bin is emptied, but they are surviving and lots of tiny spiders have now hatched and will disperse shortly. It just shows how strong the web is protecting them. I went on another field trip looking at spiders recently. Whilst I

was searching for ground hunting spiders, I noticed something running around my hand. This was a tick, which I quickly put into a tube. It turned out to be a rabbit tick and there were rabbit droppings in the area. The tick is now on its way to Porton Down for analysis as rabbits are suffering from a fever transmitted by the ticks. Ticks are now getting more common, and if you go out walking it is best to wear long trousers and socks and check for ticks on your return. Special instruments can be bought from chemists to remove the ticks without leaving the mouth parts in your skin. If you are bitten by a tick go to your doctor as soon as possible as you will probably have to go on a course of antibiotics. Not all ticks carry Lyme Disease but it is better to have it checked.

There has been a lot of talk about 'rewilding' lately. This might worry some people who like neat and tidy gardens and parks. We are not talking about reintroducing bears, wolves, lynx and wildcats, at least not in this area. It basically means giving nature a helping hand so that the dramatic loss of species and natural environments is reversed. It has been proved that some declining species can be encouraged back given the right conditions. Isabella Tree's book 'Wilding' on the return of nature to a British farm shows exactly that. You all probably know that Roger Kite and I garden for the benefit of wildlife. Between us over the years we have had 29 species of bird, frogs, newts, mice, shrews, dragonflies, Noctule and Pipistrelle bats, weasel, foxes, badgers, hedgehogs and countless insects and spiders. We both have ponds and there are two more ponds in our little close. This is probably the most important way to encourage wildlife into your garden. According to the RSPB, 90% of ponds

have disappeared during the 20th century. No wonder amphibians have declined. Gone are the days when some of us, bucket in hand, stood by the side of a busy road to make sure the frogs and toads got safely back to their traditional ponds. You do not have to have a large pond, even an old washing up bowl will attract frogs. Birds need water and a shallow container will encourage them to drink and bathe. Many people feed the birds all year round. The siting of bird feeders is important. If they are in the open birds will hesitate to use them. They need to be able to dart into cover when the Sparrow Hawk zooms through the garden, so position the feeders near to a hedge or bush. Blue, Great and Coal Tits grab a seed from the feeder then fly to a branch to eat it as they feel safer there, where they cannot be bullied by larger birds.

Too many people are paving over their front gardens with no drainage facilities, which can cause problems downhill. Fences, instead of hedges, are also becoming more popular preventing creatures from travelling around. Just a small hedgehog flap will alleviate this problem. In order to attract more insects into your garden certain plants are better than others. Wildflowers are, of course, the best as insects and plants evolved together. Many insects feed on specific plants and if they disappear so do the insects. I let some Ragwort and Willow Herb grow in my garden and I have been rewarded with Cinnabar Moth caterpillars and Elephant Hawk Moth caterpillars which feed on these plants. Unfortunately, many cultivars fail to provide sufficient nectar to attract bees, hoverflies and other insect feeders but my introduced alien cotoneasters were often covered in bees during the summer and into the autumn. Please let me know if you have left any of your garden to go 'wild' and what you have seen as a result.

Neil Porter: 'There is data indicating that there may be a Jay influx from the continent where there are a lot of records in the Netherlands. Redwings have been noted coming in large flocks so expect to see the winter thrushes around soon. Also keep an eye out for another good Waxwing year around Manchester Road in November and December, and maybe the Bramblings will come again.'

Joan Buckland 10.10.19

Vespa velutina, also known as the Asian hornet, is an invasive non-native species from Asia. It arrived via a shipment of pottery into a French port in 2004, where it spread rapidly. As a highly effective predator of insects, including honey bees and other beneficial species, it can cause significant losses to bee colonies, and potentially other native species.



On Friday 4th October a nest was destroyed following the confirmed sighting of an Asian hornet near Christchurch, Dorset after it was reported by a member of the public. It is imperative that any Asian hornet colonies in the UK are detected and destroyed before queens are released. As we have an abundant insect population, Asian hornets may not just be found in apiaries, they could also be at places where insects congregate – stands of ivy, for example, and on decaying fruit.

Graham Appleby