



Newsletter



Rivelin Valley Conservation Group

Winter 2020 no 113

Through The Chair

Welcome to our Winter newsletter which covers the period leading up to Xmas. I'm just planning our 29th AGM and even thinking further ahead to what would be a suitable celebration for our 30th anniversary the following year. This is my 10th year as chairman; a period that I have enjoyed enormously thanks to the valuable support of its committee and members. The RVCG remains buoyant and has made good progress in capturing the history of Rivelin Valley thanks to contributions from Mike Dyson and Sue Shaw. I have joined Roger Kite in giving walks and talks about the Rivelin Valley and making use of Mark Baldwins generosity, opening the doors to Mousehole Forge for us on occasion.

So, we are in a good place and may long it continue. However, after 10 years at the helm I will be giving notice to step down at this AGM as I just need a break. I also carry out several other important functions that I may have to unpick myself from in the next few years. The RVCG is a highly respected organisation so please give some thought about playing an important part in its continued success.

Your annual membership is now due and thank you for your generous donations last year totalling £1692. I would dearly love to see a Rivelin Valley Industrial Museum. Many locals have items in their personal collections that we could bring together for everyone to see. We will be doing another HOD this year (Sep 20th) and need your support. Please join us at our AGM when we celebrate our achievements.

Graham Appleby
RVCG Chairman

Contacts

Chairman	Graham Appleby	01142660203
Task Force Coordinator	Keith Kendall	01142307144
Newsletter	M Sanderson	01142306790
Treasurer	David Lyon	01142302660
Group Recorder	Joan Buckland	01142305829
Speaker Organiser	Irene Harrison	01142335780
Membership	Chris and G Roe	01142665473

Mail to : rvcg@supanet.com
Web: www.rivelinvalley.org.uk

Planning news

This space is intentionally blank.

Planning news is only available to RVCG members. Membership can be found [here](#).

Planning news

This space is intentionally blank.

Planning news is only available to RVCG members. Membership can be found [here](#).

Memories of the valley – from Paul Thompson

My family and I lived at Gleadless Valley when the estates there were new, and the various woods were a playground for me and my childhood friends. But we also had family who had an allotment at Rivelin Valley on the hillside below Stannington and not far from the river. Despite the two bus rides, it was a treat to spend a summer Sunday there, playing around.

I remember seeing lizards on the dry-stone wall bordering the allotment. My cousins and I would go down to the river to catch stone loach fish. I would lift a large stone gently and see a loach motionless beneath. Then I would lower a fishing net in front of it with one hand and touch its tail with the other, and it would shoot forward into the net. Of course, we always put them back.

On a rather more serious note, once a very young cousin was rescued by a family member from a water butt in which she could have drowned, near the allotment.

Book review

Redmires – Tales from the Ridge
Keith Baker

This nicely concise book published last year, tells the rather amazing story of the stretch of land between the former Lodge Moor Hospital and Redmires reservoirs.

As if the history of these two iconic local landmarks were not enough, we also get to hear about a lost racecourse, long forgotten beer houses, a WW1 army camp on the land opposite the Three Merry Lads and then its subsequent use for prisoners in both world wars. Rather astoundingly the camp held the German U-boat captain, Karl Dönitz, who later became Führer for a short period after Hitler's suicide.

Even more astoundingly, the Council proposed the use of the former camp as an airfield in the 1950s, in part because the land was relatively flat, and the shape allowed for a fairly long runway. The proposal had strong support from the Chamber of Commerce and got as far as a

The proposal had strong support from the Chamber of Commerce and got as far as a formal application to the Aviation Ministry. It's interesting to speculate what the Redmires Ridge would have been like now had the scheme gone ahead, especially if the post-war plans for a western ring road down Coldwell Lane and Hagg Lane had gone ahead!

To find out what happened to this scheme go out and buy the book! It also includes some intriguing pictures, including a rather stylish lino-cut drawing of the camp in 1946 by a German prisoner. You should be able to find it in the newsagents in Crosspool or Lodge Moor.

Open meetings – recent talks

Tuesday 8th October 2019
Rachel Parkin - History of Garden Styles

Rachel works at Chatsworth House in Derbyshire.

One of the first gardens was thought to be the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, around 3,000 years BC. Some of our ancient ancestors must have recognised the attraction of walking around a beautiful place and enjoying the colourful flowers and perfumes. Mud walls were built for the purpose of irrigation to keep the moisture in after watering.

At Chatsworth, the ornamental use of fountains was recognised in the early 1600's and fish-ponds were also introduced.

Formal gardens were laid out so that the ladies could take afternoon walks without having to struggle through the undergrowth of the surrounding countryside that would have dirtied their clothes. No doubt they would have parasols on sunny days to keep their complexions nicely pale unlike the girls who worked in the surrounding countryside tilling the soil.

Lord Strafford of Wentworth Castle also had a garden. Tree lined avenues were constructed to allow horse and carriage riding.

Tuesday 14th January 2020
History of Surnames - Roy Yates

As for many of us, Roy said that Rivelin Valley was his playground as a child.

He especially remembers frog spawn, tadpoles and fully-grown frogs as many children have over the years and, of course, the chance to get some healthy fresh air.

Surnames are quite long lived but before the Norman Conquest there were none. Those we have now have many varied derivations. For example, Harrison comes from the ancient Greek meaning peace and Henry is an old Germanic name for the same.

Alfred is from the old English Ethelred meaning strong and powerful.

Some surnames are descriptive such as Grey, Long, Brown or Longstaff. You might be known as Dickson (Dick's son). Noaks was a person who lived near an oak tree. Fitz meant 'son of' as in Fitzwilliam or Fitzpatrick. Ford, Bridge or Hill was from where you lived. Butcher, Baker or Smith was your occupation. A local name here "Hagg" as in Hagg Lane meant land enclosed by a hedge.

From the vaults

An article from the May 1994 edition of the newsletter (number 11!)

In the 19th century the Wilsons of Sharrow, manufacturers of snuff bought some of the moors around Sheffield. Derwent Moor was bought for £3500 and Moscar for £3316 respectively. Stanage and Hallam Moors were already owned by the family.

The moors weren't acquired for the pleasure of an afternoon stroll but for the serious business of grouse shooting which starts on the Glorious 12th (of August).

In 1935 the Sheffield Telegraph reported an 'outstanding performance on the grouse moors' by a Mr Thomas Kingsford-Wilson who had been shooting for 50 years. His bag over this period was very nearly

150,000 grouse, pheasants, partridge, woodcocks, rabbits and hares. Each kill was carefully recorded – as we can see in this entry from 28 August 1893:

My first shot was fired in a hurry and the gun kicked slightly. This was the beginning of a black shoulder [a bruise presumably].

The second drive started at 10.55 and the gun got so hot that the two fingers of my left hand were slightly blistered, although I wore thin kid gloves.

I knocked down 30 brace [ie 60 birds] and one bird fell inside the battery and hit a man, the effects of which he felt for a fortnight.

In the third drive my fingers got more blistered and my shoulder worse.

After lunch, the fourth drive. I rolled a piece of paper round a blistered finger and made no attempt to shoot any wounded birds on account of my shoulder.

On the fifth drive, my shoulder got very bad indeed and I had to sit in the bottom of the battery on account of the pain. I then had a drink of neat whisky, after which I shot very well.

The next day my arm was black down to the wrist and I was also black from the shoulder to my waist. I did not attempt to shoot grouse against until September 30th and even then, I was not able to stand a whole day.

Apparently, he attributed his rather disturbing shooting prowess to drinking Tennants Bitter when he was young and Wiley's Black Label Whisky when he was older.

Extract from the Wilsons of Sharrow – by MHF Chaytor (1962)

Erratum: *In our previous newsletter No.112 we incorrectly stated that we had received £89 in donations for the year, but it was actually just for the previous 3 months. We have in fact received £1692 in donations for the whole of 2019.*

Barn Owls

Now is a good time to see barn owls. You might hear them 'hissing' as they fly around their hunting grounds between dusk and dawn looking for their prey.

I once went down the garden in the dark to retrieve some washing and a rather frightening white shape swooped low over my head. I could feel the draught on my hair.

During WW1, my uncle was on lonely night duty in France. He saw a large white shape coming towards him and thought that an angel had come to get him.

Sadly, they are in decline, so please do let us know if you see one locally (or indeed, any other owl.)

Nettles

Have you got nettles in your garden? Don't dig them all up! Butterflies such as peacocks love their flowers. My grandmother made nettle beer that she used as a "pick me up". She only gave it to me once. Its taste was enough to make me think 'never again'!

Hedgehogs in trouble

Beatrice Potter endeared children with her stories of these little spiky creatures. But they are in decline and pesticides and motorways are being blamed for some deaths.

Many years ago, I had a female hedgehog with her two babies on the lawn one summer. Sadly, the last hedgehog I saw in my garden was just a rather gruesome inside out skin. I was told that a badger had probably eaten it.

Garden walls and fences that reach the ground stop hedgehogs moving around so it is good to leave them a small space to get through.

Margaret Sanderson

Don't forget it's time to renew your subscription for 2020 using the enclosed form!

The Hawley Collection

You may have read in a previous newsletter about the demise of Dennis Smith and the disappearance of his collections of historic artefacts and documents that are of significant national importance. Thankfully, many of these were given to the Hawley Collection at Kelham Island and I was invited to attend by Geoff Preece. I was greeted by Nick Duggan who is also an RVCG member and who showed me around the inner sanctum of the Hawley Collection.

"The Hawley Collection is an internationally important material record of tool making, cutlery manufacture and silversmithing from Sheffield, together with complementary material from Britain and the rest of the world.

This collection is unique in that it combines finished artefacts and work in progress to illustrate how things were made. Together with published catalogues, archival material, pictures, photographs, tapes and films, it records the development of many of Sheffield's manufacturing processes and products and the skills of the workpeople involved.

Ken Hawley



For over fifty years he collected the tools, the 'tools that made the tools', catalogues, photographs and information connected with the Sheffield tool, cutlery and silversmithing industries. During his working life, including thirty years selling tools in his own shop in Sheffield, he acquired an unrivalled knowledge about Sheffield's industrial heritage.

It was Ken Hawley's wish that the Hawley Collection stay in Sheffield to provide exhibitions, displays and information for the people of Sheffield and visitors to the city. He saw the Collection as a tribute to the craftsmanship, skills and excellence displayed over the centuries by Sheffield firms and workpeople.

(As described on the Hawley Collection website)



A selection of giant tools produced purely for exhibition purposes demonstrating Sheffield's manufacturing skills

So, Ken Hawley's personal collection became the beginning of a unique collection of Sheffield tools. The cataloguing of these tools and the museum displays are carefully controlled by around 25 part time volunteers. If that wasn't enough, other national tool collections have been donated to the Hawley collection and now storage and display space is a problem. A number of Mousehole Forge anvils are also part of the collection but are tucked away out of sight in a warehouse with no space to display them. The Hawley Museum has some astonishing exhibits that everyone in Sheffield should see. The skill of our tool and cutlery manufacturers was second to none.

Nick pointed out the small collection of items that had belonged to Dennis Smith which were piled neatly in a corner waiting for some available resource to be able to analyse and catalogue it. It was a relief to see this valuable collection in good hands but sadly Dennis's original William Lowe sketches were not present.



Nick Duggan – Hawley Collection Volunteer

So, feeling thoroughly enthused by this enlightenment, I arranged for the RVCG committee to have a guided tour around the museum. Kelham Island is classed as 'heavy industry' and the Hawley Collection within it is classed as 'Light Industry'. On Wed 4th Dec the RVCG committee and friends and spouses were again met by Nick Duggan who split us into two groups due to space constraints. We were all given a back of the scenes tour, a guided tour of the museum and a visit to the 'National Saw Collection' where over a thousand saws were on display and expertly described by one of their keepers, Paul Kipling.



Paul Kipling – man of a thousand saws!

The oldest saw was the 'Manners saw' 1790. Paul also introduced the 'Japanese saw' which is growing in popularity due to its double-sided blade and the 'Stradivarian saw' manufactured purely as a musical instrument. There are another thousand saws without space to display them. Many of the saws are described in the book 'British Saws' by Simon Barley.

Talks and Events

Come along to one of our free talks* highlighting different cutlery companies, aspects of cutlery, catalogues etc. These will take place at **Kelham Island Museum at 1.30 p.m.:**

Wednesday, 4th March 2020 - Cutlery Used for Afternoon Tea

Discover the wealth of cutlery produced for use for Afternoon Tea

Nick Duggan

Wednesday, 6th May 2020 - The Development of Stainless Steel

A talk and handling session focusing on stainless steel for table knives

Geoff Preece

Wednesday, 8th July 2020 - Mappin & Webb Designs

Explore the company's designs for knives and other tableware

Jean Thornton

Wednesday, 16 September 2020 - Pinder, Price and Potter

A closer look at these Sheffield companies

Nick Duggan

Wednesday, 11 November 2020 - Rodgers and Richards

Joseph Rodgers was one of the largest Sheffield manufacturers of table knives

Doug Hindmarch

Sunday, 19th April - Launch of Digital Knife Archive and Identification Day

We look forward to launching our digital knife archive in the Hawley Gallery - more information coming soon!

*Normal admission charges will apply if you wish to visit the museum before the talk.

The 'Digital Knife Archive' is a project sponsored by the Heritage Fund to help identify surnames with the cutlery manufacturers. You will be able to enter your name into a computer and it will give you details of cutlery manufacturers with the same surname. If you have any connections with the historic Sheffield cutlery trade and have any photographs or artefacts, Nick Duggan will be pleased to hear from you.



After the mouth-watering exposure to such fascinating archives, Nick then brought us into a room where a selection of the Dennis Smith collection was laid out on a long table for our perusal. This was a fitting finale to an extremely interesting day. We thanked Nick and his colleagues and the RVCG donated £50 to the museum. The Hawley Collection is of World-Wide significance but manages purely on donations. It receives no money from Kelham Island but has the use of the space free of charge. A new building extension is being planned.



RVCG Committee Members + Friends and Spouses

Task Team

October

The RVCG was asked to install two memorial benches by two different families in remembrance of their loved ones. This was due to happen in September but had to be cancelled due to inclement weather however the weather on our October task day was much kinder. We split the team into two with Keith Kendall managing a bench installation near swallow wheel and myself, Graham Appleby, managing a bench installation at Havelock Dam (Walkley Bank Tilt). The Havelock Dam memorial bench was for the Hudson Family.



The Hudson Family

Lynn Hudson had recently and tragically lost her husband who was out on his beloved motor scooter when a delivery van pulled out on him at the junction of Rails Road and Manchester Road. A particularly beautiful site was chosen for the bench where a previous bench had once stood, and several family members attended this particularly moving occasion.



The Hudson Memorial bench at Havelock Dam

Lynn also sponsored a bird box which was installed on the tree adjacent. More recently I was contacted by a member of STAG (Sheffield Tree Action Group) asking why there was a red spot on the tree. On checking with the Council, it would appear the tree is diseased and needs to be cut back as have several other trees in that location. This will no doubt spoil the ambience of the site, but I suppose public safety must come first.

November

The November task day was planned to improve the pathways at the S bend (Glen Bridge) on Rivelin Valley Road. However, the week before, we saw an enormous deluge of rain that washed footpath topping away and the sudden increased velocity of the river caused serious damage to the riverbank along the stretch between Upper Cut Wheel at the S bend and Hind Wheel. We are in serious danger of losing this footpath, but the repairs required are deemed beyond the scope of our task team. Therefore on the task day, we did the planned resurfacing around the horse hop at Upper Cut but we also used half the material to resurface the path down to Nether Cut that was just across the road and had been washed away in the recent storm.

This was extremely hard work but again the task team volunteers did a remarkable job which has withstood more recent storms. We did all this with a few volunteers in about 4 hours. I wonder how much the Council would have paid contractors to complete the same job?

From this.....



And this.....



To this.....



Graham Appleby

Tree Felling Training

In October, we were given the opportunity to take a chainsaw course sponsored by SLLP and SWT (Sheffield Wildlife Trust). Graham and Keith attended from RVCG along with Narelle Willis from SWT. It was a very challenging week of chainsaw maintenance followed by tree felling in managed woodland at Clumber Park. Sadly, Keith had to retire with damaged knee ligaments. Narelle and I managed to endure the training followed by a rigorous practical examination the following week which thankfully we both passed.



New Lumberjacks - Narelle Willis and Graham Appleby
Thank you also to Danny Hodgson at SWT

Graham Appleby

Update on the 'Protecting Sheffield from Flooding' programme

I attended a meeting of the Sheffield Waterways Strategy Group recently where a Sheffield City Council officer gave an update on progress on the 'Protecting Sheffield from Flooding' programme:

- Plans have been prepared for conventional flood defences to be built along the lower River Loxley, from Malin Bridge to its confluence with the Don near Owlerton. Work should start soon.
- Attention is being turned to improving flood protection on the rivers above Sheffield City Centre, including on the Sheaf and the Porter – meaning that controversial plans for a flood storage area at Endcliffe Park may need to be considered again.
- It was also confirmed that the proposal for a flood storage area (FSA) in Rivelin could be looked at again. However, discussions have been started with Yorkshire Water about the possibility of using reservoir storage as part of the flood prevention strategy – this approach is being trialled near Hebden Bridge and if put in place in the Don catchment, could mean that the Rivelin FSA was not needed. In any case, SCC and Yorkshire Water are planning to work together to manage the catchment more effectively.
- Both the Sheffield City Council and the Don Catchment Rivers Trust have appointed a Natural Flood Management Officer, to work on projects in the River Don catchment. [Natural Flood Management (NFM) is when natural processes are used to reduce the risk of flooding and coastal erosion. Examples include: planting trees and hedges in strategic places, installing 'leaky dams' along water courses to hold back water in times of high rainfall, creating opportunities for floodplains to store water, and changing the way land is managed so soil can absorb more water (so less runs off the land). NFM can be a cost-effective and sustainable way to help manage flood risk and can help to reduce the need for the more traditional engineering methods of flood protection.]

At the same meeting, a representative from the Environment Agency talked about what happened during the flooding in November 2019, and the flood defences and operations now in place in Sheffield that had successfully prevented the extensive flooding

experienced in 2007. The reasons why areas downstream such as Doncaster and Fishlake were flooded so badly this time will be examined in an Environment Agency report due out in the next few months.

Sue Shaw, 1st February 2020

Screening of film about Natural Flood Management

Anyone who would like to know more about Natural Flood Management and what is going on locally might be interested in a screening of the film High Water, Common Ground, being shown on 6th April at the Showroom Cinema

(<https://www.showroomworkstation.org.uk/highwater>). This is a documentary exploring the innovative flood risk management measures being taken by flood-affected communities around the country.

The event will be hosted by Sheffield and Rotherham Wildlife Trust and will also include a short film looking at water in the Sheffield Lakeland area, investigating how sustainable management of the rural landscape on the outskirts of Sheffield can help protect the city from flooding.

After the film there will be Q&A session where members of the audience are invited to discuss the role of natural flood management with a panel of local experts. Panellists will include Keith Tomkins, Sheffield Lakeland Landscape Partnership Manager at the Sheffield & Rotherham Wildlife Trust and Dr Jon Bridge, Senior Lecturer in Physical Geography at Sheffield Hallam University.

Joined-up Heritage Sheffield (JuHS)*

JuHS is developing a project that will bring together a 'Local List' of sites of heritage interest – for example buildings, open spaces, landscapes, structures and other artefacts. The List does not, as yet, have any legal or Planning status but could be used to lobby organisations such as the Council to take account of local views regarding the site. The Local List will be in addition to statutory listings (such as Listed Buildings) so is a way of highlighting places that currently have no official protection. So far, with help from others, I have submitted nominations for the Long Causeway (Lodge Moor/Redmires) and Ruskin House on Bolehill Road in Walkley (where Ruskin set up his museum). Of course I'm also working on nominations for all of the Rivelin mill sites, which, with the exception of Mousehole Forge, currently have no official

designations. The format and presentation of the List are currently under development, but soon individuals or groups will be able to nominate sites/artefacts of heritage interest that they would like to see included. So start thinking of interesting places or artefacts around your local area that you feel should be recorded and known about more widely. We will let you know when the invitation is made for the public to send in nominations.

Last year JuHS ran a series of workshops, one of which I attended, to generate ideas and views on taking forward a plan to create a Heritage Strategy for the city of Sheffield. The plan deals with heritage of all kinds, from the city's buildings and museums to its industrial past and open spaces. The document, which is thought to be the first in the country to be community-led rather than produced by a local council, sets out a vision for the 10 years up to 2030, and reflects a feeling that Sheffield could do more to promote its history and heritage. Having a strategy in place could help to boost visitor numbers and potentially bring in funding for projects worth millions of pounds. A draft Strategy for consultation was produced from all the input received – this can be viewed at:

<https://www.joinedupheritagesheffield.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Strategy-final-15jan20.pdf>. The consultation runs through February, with plans to launch the final version of the Strategy in the summer (hopefully in June).

*Joined-up Heritage Sheffield is a community-led initiative (now a charity), started in 2014, that brings together a broad range of organisations and individuals representing the Sheffield area's very diverse heritage sector to explore ways to develop a better resourced, better connected and better communicated heritage offer for a wide range of audiences. Partners include: Sheffield Civic Trust, Sheffield Cathedral, The University of Sheffield, Sheffield Hallam University, Sheffield City Council, Sheffield Manor Lodge, Heeley City Farm and many others including community groups.

Sue Shaw, 1st February 2020

Heritage Open Days 2020

The dates for the Heritage Open Days events this year have been announced as 11–20 September 2020, with a theme of 'Hidden Nature'. RVCG is planning to join in again, on either Sunday 13th or Sunday 20th September. We will be looking for volunteers again, so please bear that in mind and watch out for more information.

Sheffield Heritage Fair

The RVCG had a stall at this very busy and successful event held at the Millennium Gallery in January 2020. Over 40 community and other groups in Sheffield were represented, so it was interesting to see what is going on all across the city and inspiring to be in a room full of people with similar enthusiasms! Many people stopped at our stall for a chat, particularly with memories of walks in Rivelin. It was also good to talk to some RVCG members and welcome new members who signed up, as well as to sell some books! I'm sure there will be another Heritage Fair at a similar time next year, so look out for publicity nearer the time.

Two new Trusts for Sheffield

In November 2019, a Trust pushing for a riverside pathway along the upper Don had a public relaunch as the Upper Don Trail Trust – this aims to bring together city and local councils, river users, and volunteers to provide a twelve mile active travel riverside trail from Stocksbridge to Lady's Bridge in the city centre, passing through Hillsborough and Kelham Island on its way. A new video (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G8hnsz0didk>) shows how much of the trail already exists in some form, and how new businesses, shopping centre, and housing developments can be linked together to get walkers, cyclists and runners off busy roads and onto a new signposted riverside trail.

The Sheaf and Porter Rivers Trust, launched in May 2019, aims to open up and re-naturalise these two rivers, which are often hidden in culverts or behind factories in the city centre. Developments near the Sheaf and Porter could also create safe and attractive routes where people are encouraged to walk, run and ride their bikes, as an enjoyable way to travel in a sustainable way.

Sue Shaw, 1st February 2020

THE RECORDER – Winter 2019/20

The Recorder

I hope you have all managed to evade the horrible winter virus that is going the rounds. Unfortunately, my husband and I both succumbed to this at the same time, which was not good. Hopefully that is behind us now and there is the Spring to look forward to. Every year now brings more records and last year was one of the wettest on record and also had the hottest day recorded. I have four water butts and did not empty any of them last year. So far it has, again, been a very mild winter with only a few days of frost and a scattering of snow. My lawn is mostly moss and very soggy. Maybe the birds will use a lot of it for their nests.

Spring is my favourite season when everything is rejuvenated. I just love the colours at this time – the many shades of green leaves and the yellows and blues of the flowers. Insects are active and birds are busy nest building and laying eggs. Frogs and toads are making their way back to their ponds. There is a lot to observe. My spirit lifts when I see the first swallow and swift and then I hope their nesting sites have not been destroyed and they can have a successful nesting season. If your house is suitable and you can remember when swifts, swallows and house martins nested nearby put up a special nest box (obtainable from the RSPB) and encourage them to return. They need all the help they can get as it is our fault that their traditional nesting sites are disappearing.

Birds of prey start to brood their eggs as soon as each is laid, so the chicks are different sizes. If food is in short supply, only the strongest will survive, and the runt will be eaten by its sibling. Other birds do not brood their eggs until the last one is laid so they all hatch at the same time.

We have not seen the influx of

Redwings, Fieldfares and Bramblings in our area but, it seems, they have preferred Lancashire this year.

Thousands of Redwings are feeding on a bumper crop of holly berries in the Ribble Valley. There is still time yet and maybe when those berries are depleted, they will come over the border to us. The Waxwings are still in Sweden even though they have had plenty of snow in the north of the country.

A couple of weeks ago, on lovely clear, blue sky days, the moors above Bradfield were being burnt by the landowners. There was a huge cloud of smoke several kilometres long straddling the horizon. Anyone living in the area must have been affected by it. Thousands of insects will also have been destroyed, which is certainly not helping nature. Wildlife trusts move forward with the times, but some people stick tenaciously to old ways.

Mavis Roadhouse has a query and says 'I have a small espalier apple tree (Lord Derby?) which has borne plenty of fruit for over 20 years. This year I did not see much blossom but became aware of plenty of little apples. There was no 'June drop' and I did a bit of thinning. The apples grew and grew – much bigger than usual and I had a bumper crop of beautiful yellow apples. However, when I came to use them and cut them open there were no pips at all. Has anyone else had this happen and is there a simple explanation?' If there are any gardeners out there who can help Mavis please get in touch.

I have noticed the Spring flowers are early again this year. The snowdrops have been out for a few weeks and even daffodils are out in some places. My wild primroses have also been in flower since the new year. The catkin season will be next starting with the Hazel, then the Birch, Alder and Oak. If you are poring through the seed

catalogues, I hope you will buy a packet of wildflower seeds to sow in a sunny spot in your garden. Please let me know how they get on and what wildlife is attracted to your garden. Being in the garden or in nature is my stress buster – try it – it may work for you too.

Thank you to the following for their records:-

Sue Shaw S6 – 25.1.20 -Sue has seen two pairs of Dippers on the Rivelin, which is great news. Having Dippers, Kingfishers and Herons on our river indicates that it is in good condition and pollution free. These birds prefer specific habitats which are getting scarcer, so go down the valley and see them whilst you can.

Neil Porter S6 – 2.11.19 – Little Owl; Buzzards over the valley; Jays, Bullfinches and Pheasants regular visitors to the garden; 31.12.19 and 8.1.20 – Kingfisher at Frank Wheel; regular sightings of Pink-footed Geese over the valley in December and January.

Derek Hastings S10 – 31.7.19 – female Sparrow Hawk eating pigeon in garden; 22.1.20 – Male Pheasant visiting garden regularly.

Sandra Barnett S6 – 6.1.20 – early morning sighting of three Roe deer near Swallow Wheel.

Margaret Sanderson S10 - getting 15 – 20 Sparrows regularly on her Cotoneaster bush.

Vivian Falshaw S10 – 13.10.19 – Nuthatch; 8/9.10.19 – Blue Tits, Blackbirds, Great Tits, Wood Pigeons, Robin in garden; 12.12.19 – Redwing on Sycamore in the garden.

Paul Thompson S6 – 6.11.19 – Heron perched high on ridge tiles of a building in Overton Road, on the hillside above the 'Wednesday' training ground. Also saw a mangy large fox in his garden in Wisewood.

Joan Buckland S10 – Garden highlights – female Blackbird with ring; female Bullfinch with white specks on head; 27.11.19 – male Blackcap; 7.1.20 – female Blackcap; 5.1.20 Buzzard being mobbed by Crow over Manchester Road; 12.1.20 – 25+ Pink-footed Geese flying towards Lodgemoor, also heard another flock going in the same direction on 18.1.20 at 6.15pm.; 22.1.20 – 7 Blackbirds.

Joan Buckland
31.1.20

Honey Bees

So what are the bees doing at this time of year? So from October to December, a honey bee colony will have kicked out all the male drones and will have reduced in numbers from around 50k in the summer to around 10k. Summer worker bees live around 35 days. Winter worker bees live around 4 months. If it's cold, they huddle together in a ball with the queen at the centre. The outside temperature may be around freezing but the honeybees will maintain roughly 22C within the hive. When the queen will probably be beginning to lay a few eggs and these must be kept at 32C to hatch. The heat comes from worker bees vibrating their bodies. The ball moves around the frames of honey so they have a constant supply of food. Unfortunately mild winters mean the bees may break bond and go foraging but there is little nectar for them to collect in winter apart from ivy and snowdrops etc. so they can use up valuable stores and begin to starve. Bumble bees and wasps all die by Xmas except for the queens who will remain in a hidey hole until it is warm enough to begin to lay a few eggs and begin to emerge. You will sometimes see a plump queen bumblebee out on a mild Winter's day.

Graham Appleby