



Winter 2021 no 117

Through The Chair

Welcome to our Winter newsletter; the first for nearly 30 years without input from Margaret Sanderson who retired last year. Thank you also for your kind comments regarding our recent newsletters and I look to you to send me any recent or historic stories which may be of interest to our members.

I am very pleased to announce that Greg Shaw has recently joined the RVCG committee having volunteered to take over the management of the RVCG website from Jonathan Paragreen. Jonathan did a fantastic job for us for over 10 years and I thank him sincerely. Together with his wife Emma, they delivered our newsletters, distributed our posters and supported our public events. Quite a considerable contribution. Jonathan is not disappearing altogether, but just felt the website was ready for an upgrade and refresh.

The RVCG will be celebrating 30 years in April and I look forward to sharing its history with you at the AGM on Tuesday April 13th at 7:30pm via Zoom. We also have a couple of speakers on the evening who will share their thoughts on the value of local voluntary groups such as ours.

The annual membership fees are now due for 2021 and still held at £3 per household. Thank you to all those who have already paid via Paypal through our website. The alternative methods of payment are enclosed with this newsletter. I am immensely grateful for your continued support and look forward to the next exciting decade.

Graham Appleby
RVCG Chairman

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2021 Membership is now due. The simplest payment method is via our website at <http://rivelinvalley.org.uk/join.php>. Cost remains the same at £3 per household.

Planning

The planning article is for members only
You can find the membership form at:
[Rivelin Valley Conservation Group - Join In](#)
[Rivelin Valley Conservation Group - Join In](#)

RVCG Welcomes new Web Manager



I am very pleased to welcome Greg Shaw to the committee as our new website manager. Greg is an existing RVCG and Task team member and has responded to our request for a new website manager. He is an Academic IT officer at the Civil Engineering Department at Sheffield University and has experience in creating, securing and maintaining websites. He has immediately taken on the enormous task of building a new website for us which has also coincided with our current Service Provider closing down. It is hoped that the new website will be officially launched at our AGM in April.

The RVCG is extremely grateful for the support of Jonathan Paragreen who took over the website from myself about ten years ago, having added lots of new information and making improvements in its layout and functionality. Working with Christine and Graham Roe, one of the final things that Jonathan did was to create the facility for people to renew their membership via Paypal within the RVCG website. This was trickier than expected but now appears to be working very well. However, Paypal do make a small charge for this facility but it's worth it for the improved efficiency it brings. The RVCG is considering taking on a charitable status which may reduce our costs and make it easier to attract grants. If anyone has any knowledge of a voluntary group becoming a charity, then I would like to hear from you. The RVCG website is an important asset to the group and thankfully it is once again in good safe hands. I look forward to your comments on the new website once it is launched so that we can make sure it is fit for purpose.

Den Bank Wood

For many years, the woodland around Long Lane at Crosspool has been known as Upper and Lower Hagg Woods. The woods were apparently unnamed officially and given those names by the RVCG. This is also the birthplace of the RVCG where its task team first began work, opening up the woodland and improving public access.



However, it would seem the Sheffield City Council have now named the wood as 'Den Bank Wood' according to this newly installed signpost. This is a bit odd as the wood is adjacent to Hagg Lane and Long Lane and it's a pity we weren't consulted. This is not the first misappropriation of names by the Council as Den Bank Crescent is a bang straight road and Den Bank Drive has a sweeping bend halfway along its length!

There have been reports of shooting in the upper 'Den Bank Wood' and apparently dead birds have been seen although I have seen no proof of this, but very sad if it is true. Obviously, anyone witnessing such a dangerous act should report it immediately to the police.

Graham Appleby

RVCG AGM – Celebrating 30 Years

The RVCG will be celebrating its 30th Anniversary at its AGM on Tuesday 13th April at 7:30pm via Zoom. After the initial business I will be sharing a brief history of the RVCG with you followed by SLLP speaker Danny Hodgson from the Sheffield & Rotherham Wildlife Trust followed by a few words from Chris Baines to bring the evening to a close.

Most of the existing committee members have agreed to continue in their current roles for at least one more year.

Graham Appleby	– Chairman
Christine Roe	– Treasurer
Graham Roe	– Membership
Joan Buckland	– Wildlife Recorder
Derek Hastings	– Planning
Dr Sue Shaw	– Ecologist
Prof. Mark Bateman	– Geologist
Greg Shaw	– Website
Roger Kite	– Conservation Advisor

The RVCG will be saying thank you and goodbye to the following:

Margaret Sanderson - one of the original RVCG committee members of 30 years and newsletter editor.

Keith Kendall – RVCG Secretary, Task Team leader and Vice Chairman.

Jonathan Paragreen – Website manager.

Thankfully, we can welcome our new committee members, Prof. Mark Bateman and Greg Shaw who has taken over the RVCG website directly from Jonathan Paragreen.

The RVCG constitution states that the committee members elected annually will be Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer. Nominations are invited for these three roles to be decided by vote at the AGM.

There are vacancies for the roles of Chairman, Secretary, Task Team Leader, Newsletter Editor, Events Organiser.

For myself as chairman, I have been in the role for 11 years and have contributed significantly to the RVCG's events, Task Team and Newsletter production. The retirement of both Keith Kendall and Margaret Sanderson has left me with the full responsibility of Chairman, Task Team and Newsletter which is a considerable undertaking especially as I have lots of other interests. Whilst I enjoy participating in all these roles, I would like to find someone to take some responsibility for at least two of them. I gave 12 months notice last year to offer someone else the chance to give the RVCG some fresh leadership and because my personal circumstances may change in the near future.

The RVCG is quite strong and growing at the moment and there is a lot of interest and support for the group from its committee and membership. We have the respect of other conservationists, voluntary groups and the local Council whose land we protect. I would not want my sudden departure to bring the RVCG into crisis and look to do a gentle handover to other members over the coming months. Standing down as Chairman will tear my heart out but I would rather handover to a new Chairman for the longevity and success of the group.

There are lots of different ways the RVCG could progress with the right support. We have sketches and publications that someone could manage to sell and share with the public. We are very involved in the history of the Rivelin Valley and its recording and I would love to see a Rivelin museum where the Rivelin Cutlers could be promoted. There are lots of possibilities with the RVCG's new website by making it interactive and inspiring and attractive to new members. We could be more involved with schools and other organisations with juveniles because they will be the next generation of conservationists, but we need the volunteers to do this. Of course, you can also just sit back and enjoy the quarterly newsletter and just let us know your thoughts now and again.

See you at the AGM (bring your own pie and peas!)

Graham Appleby

Bee news

The following articles are reprinted with kind permission of BBKA.

A Bad Year

The European interest organisations, Copa Cogeca, have published new information about the 2020 honey crop in the EU. They report that 2020 marks a new low for the honey sector with a drop of 40% in honey harvests. Heavy rain and floods in Central and Eastern Europe and significant drought in July have been blamed. Some regions such as Hungary, lost 90% of the normal Acacia honey crop. Austria saw the worst crop in decades, Portugal saw drops of 80% and regions of Italy 70-80%. However, falling yields have not been matched by falling prices and Copa Cogeca said: "People need to understand that we are currently talking about the survival of 10 million hives in the EU. Ten million hives that enable 650,000 beekeepers to make a living, millions of farmers to pollinate their crops and everyone to benefit from the ecosystem services provided by bees. This situation is therefore threatening well beyond the stakes for our sector!"

Is Honey Fraud Rife?

Investigators from *The Mail on Sunday* reported that ten of thirteen own-brand honeys bought from stores including Tesco, Sainsbury's, ASDA and the Co-op raised suspicions of adulteration following nuclear magnetic resonance (NMR) tests in Germany. The suggestion is that cheaper syrups may have been added to bulk out the honey without the knowledge of the retailers or consumers. Initially, three of the four supermarkets responded to the *Mail on Sunday*; some called for better testing and others saying that NMR testing was not standard in the UK and potentially unreliable. This is not the first time such questions have been raised: in 2017 *The Sunday Times* questioned the authenticity of some manuka honey. In 2019 *The Sunday Times* twice drew attention to suspect results from NMR testing of supermarkets own-brand honey. On one occasion, Tesco removed its own-brand clear honey from sale.

At the recent COLOSS conference, Etienne Bruneau, president of Apimondia's scientific commission on Beekeeping Technology and Quality, spoke forcefully on the high global levels of honey adulteration often involving imports from China. He suggested that the UK's comparatively weak testing regimes may

Be linked to the very low wholesale price of around €1 a kilo being paid.

Mr Bruneau commented that this was well below any realistic production cost for real honey and below the price paid by other European nations with more exacting testing. The history of honey fraud was the subject of a BBKA news article in June 2020 (page 190) with similar conclusions that rigorous testing and database development are on the way.

See [Has China messed with your honey? Far more 'honey' is sold than the world's bees produce | Daily Mail Online](#)

Global Bee Map

A map showing the global distribution of more than 20,000 bee species has been created by international research led by Singapore, China and the USA. Published in the journal *Current Biology*, the study, based on nearly six million observations, found numbers of species increase in lower latitudes, with more species found in the Northern hemisphere. Interestingly, the pattern of bee diversity differs from that of many plants and animals with more species found in dry and some temperate regions due, they believe, to lack of tropical forest which provides unreliable forage. Assistant Professor, John Ascher from the National University of Singapore, said: "people think of bees as just honey bees, bumble bees and maybe a few others, but there are more species of bees than of birds and mammals combined."

UK Neonic Application

The publication, *Farmers Guardian*, reported that an application had been made for a UK emergency authorisation of the neonicotinoid thiamethoxam, which was banned for all outdoor uses by the EU in 2018.

Last year a virus significantly reduced sugar beet yields, and similar conditions this year would be likely to present similar dangers, Mr Eustice's department said. Setting out conditions for the "limited and controlled" use of the pesticide, officials said the minister had agreed an emergency authorisation of it for up to 120 days on January 11th 2021.

However, that protection won't be needed now, as the colder weather means there's less risk to the crop. Environment Secretary George Eustice said emergency authorisation was only "granted with strict conditions".

Graham Appleby

Sue Shaw Update

Redmires Camp

You may have seen some tree thinning work being undertaken this winter at the Redmires Camp plantation. This is being carried out by Sheffield and Rotherham Wildlife Trust, under the Sheffield Lakeland landscape partnership programme. The idea is to allow remaining trees to flourish, improve light access for undergrowth species and support archaeological investigation works on the former Prisoner of War camp at the site.

https://sheffnews.com/news/forestry-and-archaeological-improvements-for-redmires?utm_content=&utm_medium=email&utm_name=&utm_source=govdelivery&utm_term=

Sheffield Heritage Strategy

The "Heritage Strategy for Sheffield 2021–31", as mentioned in previous RVCG newsletters, was published on 27th January 2021. Amongst others, the Strategy has been welcomed by Cllr Bob Johnson (Leader of SCC), and Martin McKervey (Chair of Sheffield Property Association), which is an encouraging start.

"This is an important first for the city: its first heritage strategy; the first in the country to be developed by and rooted in the local community; the first, almost certainly, to take a broad and diverse definition of heritage that embraces, as you'd expect, historic buildings and the built environment but also places as well as buildings, collections and records, customs and traditions, memories, stories and languages." "Crucially, there's a ten-year Action Plan designed to lead the city to a position where it will understand and celebrate its heritage better; will champion its diverse heritage; will make better use of the economic potential of heritage; support its education value; and recognise its social, well-being and environmental benefits."

The document can be downloaded from the Joined-Up Heritage Sheffield website at

<https://www.joinedupheritagesheffield.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Heritage-Strategy-2021-31.pdf>

JuHS is asking for comments and also for volunteers to help deliver its Action Plan – contact details are on their website

(<https://www.joinedupheritagesheffield.org.uk/contact/>)

Sheffield Environment Weeks, 24th April to 6th June 2021.

It is too early to say whether there will be an RVCG litter-pick in Rivelin this year (usually held at the end of April), or an evening walk in May. But Covid restrictions permitting, hopefully it will be possible for some other events/activities to go ahead, so look out for listings at

<http://www.sheffieldenvironment.org/>.

Flood alleviation and river-related matters

Update on the 'Protecting Sheffield from Flooding' programme

- Lower Loxley flood defences are well into the construction phase, including the section behind Towsure and Malin Bridge Park and Ride. Hope to complete by the start of next winter.
- SCC has submitted a bid to DEFRA for funding to expand work on 'nature-based-solutions' including natural flood management in the Don catchment. The four South Yorkshire local Authorities have also put in a separate bid.
- There is some funding in the Environment Agency budget starting in April 2021 for investigations on using reservoirs in the Don catchment for flood risk management, but any progress is likely to take some time.
- A report is due soon from the consultant looking at how to provide the desired level of water retention for flood protection in the Sheaf and Porter valleys. The original options (including Endcliffe Park) are still on the table, but other solutions are being assessed.

Funding announced for South Yorkshire flood alleviation schemes

The government has announced £80 million investment for flood alleviation schemes across the region. This will help deliver up to 27 priority schemes, including natural flood management across the River Don catchment, Rotherham to Kilnhurst, schemes at Bentley, Fishlake, Conisbrough and Tickhill in Doncaster, the Upper Sheaf catchment and Blackburn Brook in Sheffield and Lundwood in Barnsley. However, South Yorkshire Mayor Dan Jarvis has said that a further £125 million is needed to fully protect South Yorkshire and it is expected that further lobbying of Government departments will take place in the coming months. For more details see <https://sheffieldcityregion.org.uk/mayor-responds-to-80m-funding-for-south-yorkshire-flood-defences/>

Sheffield 'Grey to Green' project

In the last newsletter I mentioned the completion of this project in September 2020. SCC is currently consulting on an extension to the project, described as follows: "Angel Street remains a key link to the city centre and funding has been secured from the European Regional Development Fund and Sheffield City Council to extend the 'Grey to Green Phase 2' scheme to the area. As in the earlier schemes, the improvements will incorporate colourful meadows, a sustainable drainage system that reduces flood risk and an improved environment for walking and cycling which will enhance the experience of visiting, living and working in the area." The deadline for comments was 11th February 2021.

<https://sheffnews.com/news/consultation-on-proposals-to-extend-award-winning-grey-to-green-project>

Natural Flood Management

An article in the Sheffield Telegraph at the beginning of January entitled "Human 'beavers' damming rivers in the city's Lakeland" described a project being run by Sheffield and Rotherham Wildlife Trust, in partnership with Sheffield City Council,

Environment Agency, local farmers and others, called "Working with Water", as part of the Sheffield Lakeland Partnership programme. In particular, they are looking at how water is managed in the landscape, ways to reduce flood risk problems and improve water quality and habitats for wildlife. Many small interventions, like tree planting, fencing off water courses, putting in 'leaky dams' across small water courses can help to slow the flow of water from the catchment down into the main river channels, thereby helping to reduce the risk of flooding.

For more details, and a couple of interesting videos, see

<https://www.wildsheffield.com/discover/nature-based-solutions/nfm/>

Use of reservoir drawdown in flood mitigation

You may have seen a report on BBC Look North on Wed 4 Jan from Calderdale, about the plan to lower reservoir levels above Hebden Bridge over the winter in an effort to help protect the town from flooding. Reducing the levels by 10% will leave some storage space for flood water if needed in the Calder Valley, an area hit by floods in recent years. This is the third time that the operation has been carried out. A press release giving details about the project is available at:

<http://news.calderdale.gov.uk/hebden-bridge-reservoirs-to-be-lowered-in-fight-against-floods/>

The town was nearly flooded again at the end of January, so it should be possible to assess the impact of the reservoir drawdown. This is the sort of scheme we hope that it will eventually be feasible to put in place in the Don catchment.

Environment Bill

In the summer 2020 Newsletter (No 115), I mentioned that MP Holly Lynch had proposed an amendment to the Environment Bill, which would have required water companies to use reservoirs to mitigate flood risk. The Bill was in the

House of Commons Committee stage (Public Bill Committee) before Christmas, and the amendment was voted down. The main arguments against were that the prime duty of water companies is to maintain secure drinking water supplies, and there is nothing to stop water companies using reservoirs for flood risk management purposes anyway - they already have a duty to co-operate with other flood-risk authorities (e.g. Environment Agency) on this and there are some good examples of good partnership working. Here is the link if you'd like to read the debate - pages 387–390 of the pdf (columns 670–675 of the actual document).

https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5801/cmpublic/Environment/PBC009_Environment%20Bill_1st-22nd_Combined_26_11_2020.pdf

On 26th January 2021, the Government announced that the Environment Bill has been further delayed. It will be rolled over into the next parliamentary session, due to lack of parliamentary time, which is disappointing news.

Name change for the Don Network

RVCG is a member of the Don Network – a group for organisations working in the Don Catchment, jointly hosted by the Environment Agency and Don Catchment Rivers Trust. At the 'Don Network Day' held online on 3rd December, attended by Graham Appleby and Sue Shaw of RVCG, there was an official switch of the catchment partnership name to 'Don, Dearne & Rother Network', along with launching a new logo and new website: <https://dondearnerother.org/>. There was a particular focus on natural flood management programmes, such as those being run by the Sheffield and Rotherham Wildlife Trust and Environment Agency. Some work is already being carried out in the Don catchment, including in Rivelin (for example at Redmires), and when we are able, RVCG hopes to be able to learn from these projects, and incorporate some of the ideas into our work in the valley.

Sue Shaw

The Mysterious Monolith

In early February, Ross Ollin alerted us to a mysterious silvery object at Roscoe Wheel that within 48 hours had disappeared. Sue Shaw did some research and found that these 2m tall triangular monoliths are appearing not only all over Britain but world-wide. The Sheffield Star newspaper reported the monolith appearing at Parkwood Springs on New Years day but had disappeared almost 24 hours later.

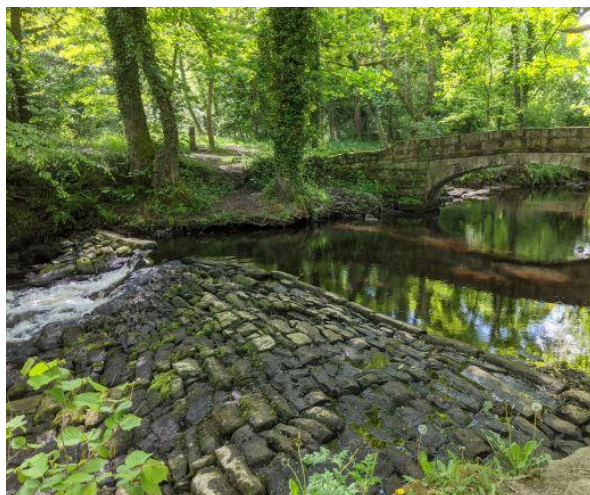


The mystery monolith at Roscoe (Sue Shaw)

According to the Guardian newspaper: 'the strange, reflective objects that have appeared in wildernesses worldwide, were an inspiring stunt but are now just a tedious prank. California, Romania, the Isle of Wight and, according to the latest reports, the Netherlands, Germany and Spain. Their rate of appearance is quickening: barely 24 hours separate photos of the lone sentinel on the Isle of Wight's Compton Beach and the new European manifestations..... as these silent messengers follow those seen at wider intervals in Utah, California and Romania'.

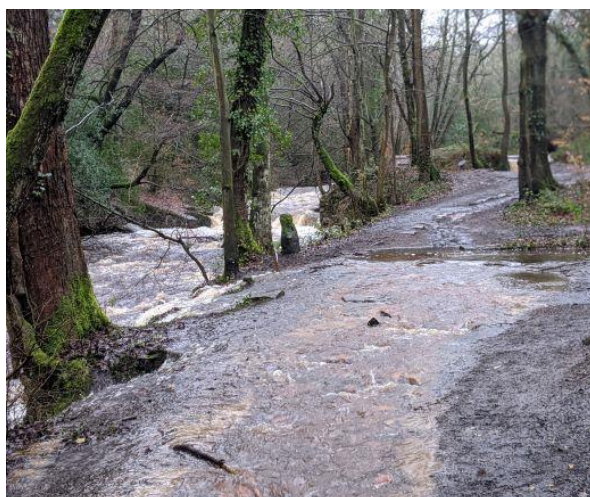
Graham Appleby

Disruption at Second Coppice



The idyllic Packhorse Bridge and First Coppice Weir in summer

Just downstream from Rivelin Corn Mill carpark is the (locally) famous Packhorse Bridge that Chris Baines successfully campaigned to have restored as a youth. For me, this is one of the most mesmerising areas of Rivelin as the water teams down First Coppice weir and the adjacent body of water reflects Packhorse Bridge. The weir diverts the river water into First Coppice down a long goit, which then flows onto Second Coppice. However, back in October 20, I received calls about the path being flooded at Second Coppice after heavy rains.



Can you imagine coming across this with your grandchildren and a dog? The hidden danger on this footpath is a deep pool just to the right.

I ventured down to find the overflow outlet blocked and the water washing the footpath

away. I immediately alerted the Council who did not respond very quickly. Months later and following further heavy rain, the top dressing of the path had become completely washed away leaving house bricks and rubble as a dangerous trip hazard. Not only that but the blocked overflow presented a deep pool of water at the side of the flooded path and anyone could have easily stepped off the path and found themselves neck deep in water.

I reported the blockage three times on the Council's official website and also contacted individuals within the Council. In January 21, the Council's Public Rights of Way (PROW) and the Rangers were unable to remove the blockage particularly as it was still under flood conditions. Unfortunately, there is no longer a sluice gate at First Coppice weir and so the goit has had to be blocked using sandbags and boards. This should slow the water down sufficiently to make it safe for work teams to be able to clear the culvert under the footpath.

Reaps Wood Flood Water Stemmed

Those familiar with driving down Rivelin Valley Road will be aware of the sudden outflow of winter flood water appearing a few years ago on the bend just before Rivelin Park.



The water was gushing out of the bottom of Reaps Wood, charging its way through the stone wall and out onto the carriageway. I'm pleased to say that this has now been successfully diverted into an adjacent culvert by Council contractor Karl Frost.

Graham Appleby

THE RECORDER – WINTER 2020/21

As I write (21 1 21), South Yorkshire has an 'amber warning' as Storm Christoph is expected bringing wind and lots of rain. Last October was the 5th wettest since 1862. The land is already saturated, and many rivers are very high and overflowing their banks. Some places have not recovered from the flooding last February. I hope they do not suffer again this year. On top of Covid 19, this would be unbearable. At least with the vaccine there is a solution in sight for the virus but preventing floods will take a lot longer to sort. We have had two short periods of snow that people made the most of building snowmen and sledging. My snowman lasted almost two weeks in the cold weather (I miss the kids!). In the north of Sweden where they live, they have one metre of snow, but the roads are still open and the buses are still running. Here the buses stopped at Broomhill when we had just a light covering. The snow plough came to clear the lane in front of my son's house, and it got stuck so another larger plough was sent to rescue it. They even cleared the entrance to my son's garage. They just take it in their stride and quickly sort out the problem. On the other hand, hats off to our milk-lady who delivered the milk on the 15th January when no other vehicle came down our road, and she came from beyond Bamford. In the past when we had quite a lot of snow nothing was going to stop old Mr Mosley who delivered the milk on his tractor.

This morning I spotted my snowdrops were in flower which raised my spirits. On Christmas Day the following were still in flower – Ox Eye Daisy, Fuchsia, Marigold, Wild Primrose, Bergenia, Everlasting Wallflower, Rose, Periwinkle, Antirrhinum and Trailing Bellflower. I picked my last Peace Rose on the 12th January. You may remember I was going to experiment with my Fuchsia bushes. Last year when they should have been pruned, they still had leaves and new buds were forming. I left two unpruned and cut back a third bush. The only difference was that the unpruned bush flowered later. All of them gave a good display until Christmas. This year I am going to prune them all and give them a good mulch. I have not tidied the garden yet. I am going to leave it until early Spring to give all the creatures that are overwintering in the seed heads, hollow stems and the soil a better chance of surviving. This should result in more insects, including moths (for our moth trapping), and food for baby birds.

There are still a lot of Cotoneaster berries in my garden waiting for the Redwings and Fieldfares to gobble up. I have only had one Redwing, on the 16th January, which finished off the Holly berries. In my garden the Rowan berries are eaten first, then the Holly and Ivy leaving the Cotoneaster to the last. Perhaps they are not as nutritious or maybe it is because it is not a native bush. From the 31st October to the 4th November I actually witnessed the migrating birds arriving. I observed these from the front bedroom window which gives a good view of the Rivelin and Loxley valleys. At 8.27am a flock of 70+ Thrushes (probably Fieldfares) flew up from the valley and over towards Crosspool. The next day from 7am spread out over an hour there was a huge flock of thousands of Thrushes and four large flocks of Jackdaws coming from the North and travelling to the South East. The next two days were the same with many flocks of birds coming from over the valley and flying up over Coldwell Lane, Sandygate and Wyming Brook. I let my neighbour, Roger Kite, know and he observed them also. Eileen Coombs saw a large flock going over her house in Sandygate. Did anyone else see this amazing sight? It is the first time that I have actually observed a mass migration here. I just happened to be looking out of the window at the right time which is often the case with nature. The birds took advantage of the wind being in the right direction and it was quite mild here with a temperature of 15° C at 10pm on the 1st November. The question is – where did they go to? No-one has reported large numbers to me. Bob and Margaret Townrow have had a few Redwings in their garden. The rest must have gone further south and maybe we shall see them on their return journey. Keep a lookout in the next couple of months.

I spotted my Snowdrops were in flower on the 18th January. We are in a bit of a frost hollow so I expect people with a sunny garden will have seen them earlier. The Bluebells and the Daffodils are also making an appearance. It will be Spring before we know it. Yesterday, 20th January, was very wet and windy but also exceptionally mild after the cold weather during the last three weeks. I went into the back garden at 9pm to throw a handful of sunflower seeds out for the foxes and there was a frog on the path. I nudged it towards the stone wall and hoped it would go back to its winter resting place as the forecast was for colder weather. They were right as we woke up to snow this morning.

The last year has been a big strain for all of us and for some very sad. Who would have

thought it would last so long? People are now getting vaccinated and things should improve. As Winter gives way to Spring, we can look forward to a brighter time and appreciate the beauty and magic of nature. February can be a lovely month when things are awakening from their winter slumbers. Buds appear, early Bumble Bees and other insects are flying, more birds join the Robin and the Blackbird in the dawn chorus, Crocus and Lungwort are in flower, the flowers of Lesser Celandine always bring a smile to my face and Bats and Frogs are becoming active. Lots to look forward to in the next few weeks. Let me know if nature has helped you to cope with the stress of the last year. This is my present stress buster – If the Robin is singing, all is well in its world. I wake up to this every morning which makes my world a little better.

Thank you for your records:-

Bob Townrow S10 – 30.7.20 – Lawn awash with flying ants. Margaret and Bob Townrow's cat has been having a hard time – on 15.10.20 Margaret saw her cat lying flattened on the ground. She heard honking and saw a formation of geese high overhead going NE. The cat was looking up at them and was obviously spooked and ran off with his ears back. On the 21.10.20 the cat came rushing into the house and was running about as though he had caught something. She could not see anything but noticed he was shaking his back leg. There was something on it which she picked off, and the thing wrapped itself round her finger. It was a leach. The cat was still unhappy and did not like the taste of the slime left on his leg so she had to wipe it off before he calmed down. I hope nothing has happened to him since. 12.1.21 – 2 Redwings grubbing about in mulch then later 6 Redwings and 1 Blackbird eating Cotoneaster berries. 12.1.21 – Tawny Owl roosting in the sun on Lydgate Lane. This has become quite a celebrity. I hope the attention does not bother it and it survives the winter.

Sue Shaw S6 – 25.7.20 – about 60 Swifts over Walkley Bank in the evening. Did anyone else see large flocks of Swifts?. 30.10.20 - Sue borrowed a bat detector and recorded quite a few Common Pipistrelle and a Noctule bat in her garden and also had a Heron in a tree in the garden on 28.11.20.

Janet Niepokojczycka – 6.10.20 – Saw a 20cm white female goldfish with a bloated belly that was unable to swim properly in Rivelin Corn Mill Pond. She used to keep fish and said it

could be egg bound or have internal problems, and she hoped it had passed away so that it was out of misery. Apart from that she and her friend enjoyed a lovely walk from Malin Bridge and back. My brother keeps goldfish and he had the same problem. Two of the fish died but quite some time later he discovered a shoal of little black fish in his pond. Goldfish are black at first. Has anyone else seen this fish? We once had an enormous Carp in this pond but it disappeared. We hope to have a project to increase the diversity of life in and around the pond. It would be wonderful to sit and watch Dragonflies and Damselflies cruising up and down, and have better cover for nesting birds.

Roger Kite S10 – Male Pheasant in garden – 2.11.20. On 28.11.20 Rogers garden was very busy. He had more Blackbirds than usual eating the Hawthorn berries; a Goldfinch and a Nuthatch on either side of the seed feeder, 10 Long-tailed Tits, lots of Blue and Great Tits, Starlings and Sparrows. He probably had to refill the feeders that day!

Mark Bateman S6 – 1.11.20 - Frogs in pond chirping away in the rain. This was a very mild day and I recorded a temperature of 15at 10pm. 2.11.20 - Female pheasant strutting around back garden. 24.11.20 – Kestrel hovering over fields adjacent to Hopwood Lane and Tawny Owl screeching in fir tree in garden.

Mari Brazil S10 – 27.11.20 – 20 – 25 Redwings eating berries in Marsh Lane.

Neil Porter S6 – 6.12.20 – Sightings on Wolf Wheel pond – 1 Grey Heron; 22 Mandarin, 1 pair Goosander; 19 Mallard; 3 Moorhen. Redwing, Mistle Thrush and many Blackbirds on Long Lane; Rooks, Jackdaw and 21 Woodpigeon feeding in fields. 3.11.20 – regularly sees 150+ Jackdaws . Mid October when the temperature was 8 ° saw a very green Common Lizard at Redmires.

Vivien Falshaw S10 – 21.1.21 - 3 Redwings on Cotoneaster bush in garden and saw Fieldfares on Manchester Road on the 14.1.21.

Joan Buckland S10 – In garden – most days lots of Sparrows, Dunnock, Black Birds, Blue Tits, Great Tits, Coal Tit, Robin, feral and Wood Pigeons; occasionally Wren, Sparrow Hawk, Long-tailed Tits, Female Chaffinch, Female Bullfinch, Male Blackcap, Goldcrest, Goldfinch, Magpie

Joan Buckland

Poets Corner

I'm pleased to have received another poem following the two from Roger Kite in previous newsletters. It would be good to make this a regular entry and so please get your poetic thinking caps on and send them to me for publishing.

This poem was sent to me by member, Louis Farrington who said the following:

"I was wondering if the RVCG might consider publishing a poem in their newsletter that my old neighbour from when we used to live in Hillsborough wrote. Her husband was born and lived for the early part of his life near the Rivelin Valley and both used to fish in the valley many years ago. They are a lovely couple, both in their eighties, and when they shared some of their poems I thought it would be nice to share the one on Rivelin with the group. It is short and simple but it really summarises the beauty of the valley I feel. I have reproduced it below with the permission of our former neighbour, Anne Sharman:-"

*'Beautiful valley where time stands still
A small paradise below the hill
Winding paths and meandering streams
Stepping Stones and forgotten dreams
Where mill wheels tell tales of a bygone era.'*

Thank you for considering.
Louis

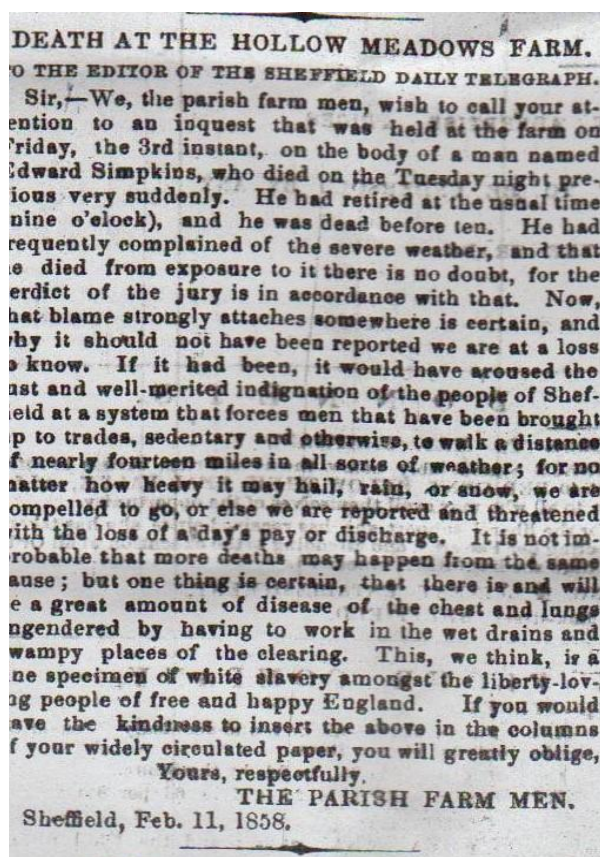
Allotment Holders Wrongly Sent Debt Collection Letter

In October 2020, numerous allotment holders on the local Hagg Lane Allotment site, received a rather startling letter from one of several debt collection agencies. Payment of allotment rent was requested within 7 days otherwise a fine of £75 would be imposed. RVCG member Graham Axelby, was incensed by the injustice as he had paid his rent early in October. He took the issue up with the debt collection company and also had an article published in the Star and Telegraph. He also pursued it with Sheffield City Council and eventually

received an apology and an acknowledgement that a number of administrative errors had led to this unfortunate situation. The debt collectors were later asked to return all the allotment holders details. Thank you to Graham Axelby for pursuing this with such tenacity as to bring the situation to a fast and successful resolution.

Death at Hollow Meadows Farm 1858

Keith Kendall recently came across this old news item on the RVCG Facebook.



DEATH AT THE HOLLOW MEADOWS FARM.
TO THE EDITOR OF THE SHEFFIELD DAILY TELEGRAPH.
Sir,—We, the parish farm men, wish to call your attention to an inquest that was held at the farm on Friday, the 3rd instant, on the body of a man named Edward Simpkins, who died on the Tuesday night previous very suddenly. He had retired at the usual time (nine o'clock), and he was dead before ten. He had frequently complained of the severe weather, and that he died from exposure to it there is no doubt, for the verdict of the jury is in accordance with that. Now, that blame strongly attaches somewhere is certain, and why it should not have been reported we are at a loss to know. If it had been, it would have aroused the just and well-merited indignation of the people of Sheffield at a system that forces men that have been brought up to trades, sedentary and otherwise, to walk a distance of nearly fourteen miles in all sorts of weather; for no matter how heavy it may hail, rain, or snow, we are compelled to go, or else we are reported and threatened with the loss of a day's pay or discharge. It is not improbable that more deaths may happen from the same cause; but one thing is certain, that there is and will be a great amount of disease of the chest and lungs engendered by having to work in the wet drains and wampy places of the clearing. This, we think, is a fine specimen of white slavery amongst the liberty-loving people of free and happy England. If you would have the kindness to insert the above in the columns of your widely circulated paper, you will greatly oblige,
Yours, respectfully,
THE PARISH FARM MEN.
Sheffield, Feb. 11, 1858.

So, this poor chap from Hollow Meadows Farm, apparently died of exposure having walked nearly 14 miles to prevent being docked a day's pay or being discharged. I wonder where he was compelled to walk to and why? Hollow Meadows to Sheffield City Centre is about 6.5 miles.

Graham Appleby

Celebrating Our Litter Pickers

In January I received the following email from RVCG member Gerry Bennet:

Hi Graham,

A very belated thank you for setting up a super zoom meeting with Nick Duggans presentation of The Hawley collection and I suspect it had one of the best attendances! There are some unexpected blessings of zoom.

As a local person I have always enjoyed regular visits to Rivelin Valley and never more so in the current times of Covid 19 restrictions. Like many people, I want to do my bit for the local community and environment and get very upset seeing how some of our beautiful open spaces have been littered and abused over the last year. As a newly retired person, I had anticipated a very different retirement but am trying to channel my energy into something positive: litter picking! As I am unable to see my grandchildren, I feel it is an investment for their future in helping with the environment and pollution of the oceans with single use plastic and other items of litter.

Today my friend and I celebrated her 69th birthday walking and litter picking from Coldwell Lane to Wyming Brook and Rivelin Dams and back via the Rivelin Roughs nature reserve, Rails Road car park and Coppice Road. As always we had a great walk and appreciate the huge efforts that are put in to keep these places beautiful.

We picked up a huge amount of litter and did a big clear up in Rails Road car park. There are 2 huge litter bins there but it was depressing to see how much litter had been deposited where cars were parked, near benches etc. The hardest bit was finding 2 huge bags of kitchen waste in bags which were disintegrating in some brambles just below the Rivelin Road side of the car park. Another walker kindly helped us to remove the majority of the waste and deposit it in the bin. I am sorry to say at that point we ran out of bags, and so there is still a considerable amount of litter there. We also disposed of 24 beer bottles!

Our litter picking activity did draw some interest on our walk and I wondered if there was a litter picking group in the RVCG. Clearly at the moment group activities aren't possible and I know you have a very proactive group doing projects in the valley.

My 2021 mantra/resolution has been to have gloves and a bag with me and to try to pick up at least 3 items of litter each day! I have a litter stick and a bag hoop. We love the valley and want to do our bit and will continue to litter pick when out. Thank you and all the action team who do so much to keep the valley so attractive.

Kind regards,

Gerry Bennet (Mrs)



Gerry Bennet on the right with her friend Kate McCullough on the left

I caught up with Gerry and Kate at Rivelin Corn Mill recently and Gerry was keen to show me her litter picking equipment that she had purchased including the hoop. The RVCG does not have a specific litter picking group although if someone wanted to volunteer as an organiser, we could consider it. Instead, we include litter picking on our monthly task day and we normally dedicate our April task day to a mass litter pick.

We have also recently noticed that the large litter bins in the Rivelin car parks have been changed for smaller ones. Gerry demonstrated how difficult it has become to empty her bag into the bin and is reluctant to leave a bag by the bin.



I have agreed to contact Sheffield City Council to understand this change to smaller bins. I want to personally thank all our litter picking fraternity for helping remove this blight from our landscape.

Graham Appleby