
Newsletter



Rivelin Valley Conservation Group

Winter 2004 no 49

Through The Chair

Stamp It Out

You can choose your own topic here. It might be light pollution from excessive floodlighting or the proliferation of horse-riding establishments when there are no adequate bridleways and horses are ridden on footpaths or the perennial problem of cyclists on the Nature Trail. Parking on grass verges is a good one – or the removal of mature gardens to allow over intensive use of site – or simply ignoring carefully considered planning conditions. You may be concerned at the slow deterioration of the Nature Trail and the odd piece of local heritage – or some other popular path. You may even have noticed the Council failing to maintain a path altogether and keeping it closed in spite of its statutory duties as the Highway Authority. Has anyone noticed an empty millpond anywhere? So! Who's got any Christmas stamps left over? Even perhaps a card or two? Why not send it to your local councillor and wish them a Happy New Year – with a little sting in the tail! Jan Wilson at the Town Hall or John Mothersole at Howden House might be upset if you left them off your list this year. It'd be a shame to upset them for the wrong reason! Good Hunting – oh and a Happy New Year

Roger Kite

Happy New Year to all our members

We hope to see you all at our events.

Please note

We now have an e-mail address
Mail to : rvcg@supanet.com
Web: www.rivelinvalley.org.uk

Contacts

Chairman	Roger Kite
2306194	
Task Force Coordinator	Keith Kendall
2307144	
Membership/Newsletter	M Sanderson
2306790	
Treasurer	David Lyon
2302660	
Group Recorder	Graham Appleby
2660203	

Thanks Again for Donations

Burnett, Davidson, Dean, Glaves, Gwynn-Jones Hague, Hanson, Hastings, Linley, Lofthouse, Maas, Saunders, Toplis, Toseland, Ward, White, Wilson. I hope no one has been forgotten. Your donations will be put to good use. So far this year, they have come to £180. Also, thank you for the supportive notes that many of you send with your subscriptions, some of them from people who can't get out but still keep a keen interest in the valley.

THANK YOU

MEMBERSHIP

2004 Membership now due

Thank you to those who have already renewed their membership for 2004. If not, please use the enclosed form or if you have already renewed, please give the form to a friend or neighbour. New members are always welcome. Please ensure that you have not already paid in 2003. We don't cost very much at £3 per household and together we can make a difference.

LATE NEWS

You cannot have missed the new logo on our newsletter heading. We have been awarded a Duke of York's Community Initiative award in recognition of the work carried out by the RVCG and its enthusiastic membership. We had a visit from the assessment team last year and as a result, a small group of us will travel to York soon to receive the certificate from Prince Andrew himself!

**Change of venue for Open Meeting
9th March 2004 7.30pm
Stannington Church Hall
'The Changing Countryside'
Chris Thompson**

Apologies to members who have found Stephen Hill inconvenient. We have felt for some time that if the group is to be seen as a valley-wide organisation, we should, at least occasionally meet in other venues.

Instructions from Rita if you're not sure of where this hall is-

From Crosspool, travel down A57 to the right turn into Rails Road. Cross A6101, Rivelin Valley Road and continue up the steep Rails Road following this winding country lane, to where you will see a large sign for Stannington. At this point proceed straight ahead (now Oldfield Road), past Reynard Lane on your immediate left, past Well Green Road on the left. The NEXT TURN LEFT IS SCHOOL LANE – (there is a signpost for Dungworth and Bradfield on the right hand corner of the junction). Turn into School Lane; Christ Church Hall is on the left-hand side.

Job Vacancy

After several years' sterling work and many more trips to the Town Hall and Bradfield Parish Rooms than she cares to mention, Rita Whiteley will be retiring from the committee in April. A hard act to follow, we know, but there must be someone out there who would be prepared to help Derek to keep a check on planning matters. Being on

the north side of the valley would help but not essential. Internet access and e-mail also make this job a lot easier. If you may be able to help, please have a conversation with either Roger or Derek. This is a vital part of the Group's work.

A New Local History Book

An Accessible Wilderness
Life at Stanage and the North Lees Estate

Derby County Council £4.99

This contains interesting snippets revealing the hard life of farming under the edge, early climbing activities and many more stories. It will be available at the Tourist Information in Bakewell and hopefully in Sheffield eventually.

Recent Open Meetings

Last year, Malcolm Nunn entertained us once again with his slides. This time we visited the Derwent Valley to see the construction of the new dams and the long since gone villages and farms, then on to Bradfield to see the curious stone near the Strines Inn which says TAKE OFF. Take off what you might ask. This is where travellers who had hired an extra horse to pull heavy loads up the steep hill had it taken off and you could be sure that you were not allowed to go another inch beyond your payment. Then on to Bradfield Church where there is a rare 1831 Watch House. Someone had the grisly duty of looking out for grave robbers who sold bodies for dissection. Then we journeyed on to Kirk Edge where Francis Fern clubbed a travelling jeweller to death and was hung and gibbeted on Loxley Common. Later the gibbet was used in a bridge but was swept away in the Sheffield Flood. Sepia faces of long gone local folks peered out at us looking at them, a straw boatered knurr and spell team, coal pickers and leg o' mutton sleeved ladies in their Sunday best, along with ancient steam engines and charabancs.

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In December we were once more in the Rivelin Hotel to sing the local carols. We had a good turnout and agreeably surprised one or two people who unsuspectingly had turned up for a quiet drink and were entertained at the same time. I'm sure we will be there next Christmas so come and join us. The local carols have a long tradition and we are pleased to keep this going. Thanks to Ian Sharpe for providing the accompaniment.

Our January meeting saw a welcome return of David Hey on the history of Hallam Moors. Once described as a hideous wilderness by early travellers we learned of how it changed according to different ownership and land use. The canons of Beauchief used it for cattle grazing, hence 'booths' as in Fulwood Booth Farm. Later it was used as a deer chase – leaving the place name 'lodge' as in Lodge Moor. Bracken has in recent times become more of a nuisance because sheep do not trample it as well as cattle. Hags were places where holly was grown as fodder for sheep and deer; the non-prickly upper leaves being used. The introduction of better fodder crops in the 18th century brought this practice to an end. Later, land ownership change brought in grouse shooting by local businessmen such as the Wilsons of Sharrow who still own moorland around Sheffield. David Hey went on an expedition to discover all the drinking holes carved into the rocks on Stanage to provide water for the grouse. These were carved in the early 1900's by George Broomhead for 7.3½d each. There are three numbered series of these and David had to lift bilberry bushes to reveal some of them but he replaced them so that you can have the pleasure of finding them for yourselves. However, he does want to know if anyone has seen grouse drinking from them.

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We always have entertaining meetings so do come and join us. All are welcome and you can bring a friend too. Remember our March meeting is in Stannington and you will be kept up to date on all that is happening in Rivelin. Also, if you have younger members in the family, do come to

our pond dipping on March 21st but make sure you bring a spare pair of socks. This is insurance because you can be sure that if you have them, you won't need them.

M Sanderson

*Think that day lost whose descending sun,
Views from thy hand no noble action done.
James Bobart 17thC (He must have been
talking about membership renewal)*

Money Saver

You would expect us to be economical with your money wouldn't you? Graham prints this newsletter on an ex-industrial copier at no charge other than for the paper.

Task Force News

Good days were had in Hag Woods on the 4th and 25th Jan, working off the Christmas excess (and no doubt the New Year excess for some).

Twenty-five fluorescent jackets have been bought and the volunteers are now very pleased that they are not mistaken for convicts on work placement schemes.

New members of this team are always welcome so contact Keith Kendall if you would like to donate a little time.

Once Upon a Time

We all know about duck racing in the valley but in times past the horse fraternity were catered for with two racecourses in the area. One was on Crookesmoor and forty years after the last race was held, an old stand was still recorded on a Fairbank's map of 1820 close to the bottom of Manchester Road. Across from the bottom of Roper Hill. Near Lodge Moor was another

racecourse, opened by a limited company in 1875 but it closed two years later. Racecourse Farm on Soughley Lane still marks the spot.

From The Fairbanks of Sheffield T Walter Hall 1932 and More of the Mayfield Valley Muriel Hall 1974

More New Homes Development.....

The Stephen Hill Girl Guides helped to make bird boxes at a recent meeting and on Sunday the 25th Jan some helped to erect 14 of the 'new homes for let'.

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Reports

Just to report that early last month, a male sparrow hawk perched for quite a while on the birdfeeder nearest to our lounge window about a metre away from us that enabled us to have a good close-up of him. He was obviously on the look out for some unsuspecting small bird.

About a week later we had another sighting as he devoured his lunch on the garden bench - a poor little blue tit that he tore apart for about ten minutes. We felt sorry for the blue tit, but it was wildlife in the raw - better than television. It's all part of the food chain - we fatten up the blue tits for the sparrow hawk to eat!

Philip Walshaw

Thank you to Mr & Mrs Gladwell after David Hey's excellent talk the other night, for their photographs and graphic description of the wildlife at the bottom of their garden on Moorbank. I have photographs of a fox, squirrel, jay, collared dove and the ultimate prize 'Woody' woodpecker on the fat ball. You must switch the television off in the evening to sit and look down the garden!

Rita Whiteley reported Red Wings in the garden this autumn. Several people have reported the annual visit of waxwings around Manchester Road junction Den Bank recently. An event I am yet to witness. This is a bird common in Northern Europe and comes south for a couple of months in late autumn and Sheffield must be about its easterly limit.

Another grisly sparrow hawk story was told by Howard Sanderson. As they sat down to eat a meal one day, a feathery commotion took place in his garden.

Walking to the window to investigate further, he sighted a sparrow hawk sitting on top of the hut; eventually flying away. Moments later a rather dishevelled collared dove appeared from under the hut with the odd feather sticking out, staggered round in a circle and back under the hut. A lucky escape for this little fellow! Also one evening Howard was presently surprised to spot a badger across the road on a neighbour's wall. It climbed down onto the pavement and across the road towards him and then off up the road. Another sight I am yet to witness is a wild badger but like everybody else, when it goes dark I draw the curtains and curl up round the fire.

My own claim to fame this month is a female pheasant in my garden which is a first for me. I carefully photographed it through the window as it pecked its way round the grass under the bird feeders. It spotted me and ran like the cartoon 'Roadrunner' down the garden out of site. Amazing camouflage these birds have.

Graham Appleby

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