



Newsletter



Rivelin Valley Conservation Group

Summer 2006 no 59

Through The Chair

It occurred to me the other day how quiet it had become down by the garden pond. Only a few tardy tadpoles are left, all the others long gone to explore distant corners of our garden and those of our neighbours. Of course they will be back in a year or maybe two to join in the springtime melee. Creatures of habit are frogs, invariably returning after all the partying to the place of birth. Young swallows and house martins are just the same – left to their own devices by worn out parents, off they eventually go to enjoy the delights of foreign parts, but next year, back they come to the self same location where they first learnt how to fly.

Sheffield is one of those rarer cities where youngsters often also return after a few years experimenting with the untold pleasures of life away at university. They don't necessarily end up back home though. Most parents by then have got used to selecting their own television programme choice.

My question for you is, "Have they ended up on your street?" They may just turn out to be Rivelin tadpoles and only need the smallest encouragement to join RVCG. So please talk to new neighbours – they may talk your language, even if you are generations apart.

Roger and Out

Contacts

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Donations

Thank you for the following donations, received since the last newsletter. Aizlewood Morrell, Peter, Falshaw. Parker, Tranter, Greatorex, Richards, Coates, Jackson, Harston, and Cressey. So far we have received around £400 this year and as we grow, more equipment is needed for our tireless menders of footpaths, dam wall repairers, planters of trees, bench putters and all the other jobs needed to make our valley accessible. Last newsletter we were sent some used stamps for Guide Dogs for the Blind and thanks this time to Sheila Hobson for sending some more.

Garden Open Day

Thanks to Margaret Sanderson for opening her garden and collecting for RVCG. £35 was donated and several of Keith's 'Walking the Rivelin' books were sold.

If anyone would like Keith's book, please contact him on 01142307144 £5 includes postage and packing

RVCG Barbecue

You might receive this newsletter in time for another reminder of this annual event on Sunday 6th August. This year there is a change of venue from that advertised in our leaflet sent with the last newsletter. It will now take place on Carver Fields owing to the fact that the hide has been vandalised. If you have any difficulty please contact anyone on our Contacts List. If you would like to book, please send £4 per person To M Sanderson, 35 Den Bank Cresc S10 5PB, stating if you require vegetarian.

M Sanderson

Rivelin Mill Pond

After many years encouragement, the council has at long last submitted a planning application to reinstate a pond at this popular site. The design has been developed from our idea which will mean a smaller pond than the original but no massive retaining structure. To get a substantial still water body back to this location will be of enormous benefit for wildlife. It will also greatly improve the landscape quality for people starting their Rivelin experience here.

We hope to eventually install picnic tables, interpretation boards and get a surfaced car park with a restricted entrance, but we imagine these finishing touches will be down to us. For now though, just keep your fingers crossed that this time it will really happen and Sheffielders have a council that does act and listen. Roger Kite

Over to You

We do like to hear your views about Rivelin Valley but this one is a first – we have had a letter from a dog. It is in reply to the mention in our last newsletter concerning the way a few dog walkers throw their doggie-poo filled bags into the bushes in Carver Fields.

Dear RVCG

I always try to use the back garden before I go out, but if I am "caught short" in Carver Fields, my mummy is not happy dangling a plastic bag all the way to Rivelin Post Office and back. Could we please have some Red Bins to save us from embarrassment?

*Tail Wags to Bracken
From Penny*

Dear Penny

Thank you for your letter. Everyone is very pleased that your mummy carries the plastic bag home. Please give her a pat on her back. She understands how horrid it is to accidentally step into this mess or clean up a child who has come into contact with it as they do manage to get it all over and trail it inside. We know most dog owners are very careful but it is a few naughty owners who spoil it for everyone. RVCG manage Carver Fields but as it is

privately owned, we cannot put bins there, as we could not afford to have them emptied. We certainly think that the council could put some bins at the ends of the nature trail as has been done in other places such as Spider Park. We suggest dog owners get in touch with local councillors to raise this issue. We are very glad you take your mummy for a walk up Rivelin and that you look after our valley. We also welcomed your kind comments about the allotments feeling safer after being opened up.

We wish you many hours of happy wanderings in Rivelin.

Woof-woof from RVCG

We are sure a lot of you have an interesting story about Rivelin. Please contact Margaret Sanderson if you would like us all to share it

A New Season of Meetings

Our first meeting at Stephen Hill is on 12th September. This is something you will all want to see. We have Patrick Harding speaking on "The Medicinal use of Plants". Some of you may remember his entertaining fungus talk a few years ago and you might even have seen him on TV explaining the reason why Father Christmas and his reindeers fly at night – something to do with hallucinatory fungi and animal urine. We have an enthusiastic expert here and you will be guaranteed not to fall asleep. Don't miss it.

Once more Glenda will be back but we are sorry that our charge for tea/coffee and cakes is going up – to 50p. Where else can you get home made cakes for this price? We have to pay for our speakers and the hire of the hall and always run on a tight budget.

**We hope to see you at Stephen Hill
Please remember, you can bring non-
members with you to our Open
Meetings**

Some Recent Events

9th May Evening Walk

We had a fine evening for our annual walk during Environment Weeks. We are always pleased to see people from outside the group join us for this event and some of them became members. The bluebells, stitchwort and yellow archangel came out just for us and a calm evening gave good reflections of the many shades of green in the ponds. We crossed Rivelin Valley Road and continued across farmland to Coppice House Farm where cows and calves, sheep and lambs made an idyllic scene while swallows swooped overhead, all three miles from Sheffield city centre. As usual Pam Revitt, undaunted even though she had just cleared up after large birthday party for a relation, provided us with drinks and cakes in the barn. Some of us had a tour of the farm, meeting cows and pigs and a very peaceful looking bull. Thanks to Pam and Frank for giving us a good ending to our walk and for their continuing support of RVCG.

30th May Alpaca Farm Visit

This was a successful evening visit by RVCG regarded by the owners of Mayfield Alpacas as a trial run for their venture that is about to open to the public.

Elaine and Nigel were taken up with the idea of owning a llama as a distraction when Elaine was recovering from surgery in 1997. She also acquired an alpaca, both as pets. George, the llama is now nine years old and the herd leader. Nobody messes with him. He took Nigel for a ride around the paddock in retaliation for having his toenails cut. Marty, the alpaca helped Elaine through her treatment. Now there are 73 alpacas and 6 llamas. More land had to be found for them and you can see them at Ringinglow.

Alpacas are ruminants with three stomachs and weigh 150lbs. Llamas are twice as heavy. Alpacas are sheared every year, producing beautifully fine wool like cashmere that can be hand spun. The first baby alpaca appeared one Christmas Eve at 3pm. It was premature and had to sleep in the stable.

It was too weak to feed and had to be fed by a tube. By Boxing Day it was suckling naturally and so regarded as a good omen. One would think that alpacas were hardy creatures but they still wait around to be let into the barn on wintry evenings. Elaine has also acquired two goats that were very popular at Stannington Carnival where the Mayfield Alpacas were on display. Cedric, a miniature goat had been badly treated and refused to go near humans so to get him used to handling, Elaine sat with him day after day in his hut until he was happy with contact. At the carnival, Cedric and the other rescued goat, Mutley were thoroughly enjoying the attentions of admiring children. From the 1st August, Mayfield Alpacas will be open every day 10am-4pm. They are at the end of Fulwood Lane, Ringinglow and there is also a café serving light lunches, a retail shop with alpaca garments and from mid August a walk through 'Alpaca Experience' If you want more information phone 0114 2630033 Thanks to Elaine and Nigel for an entertaining visit.

More on Crookesmoor Dams

In our last newsletter we learned about the growing need for water in a fast developing Sheffield and now we continue the story of Sheffield's water supply.

The Crookesmoor Dams were acquired by Sheffield Water Works Company in 1830 and as the larger impounding reservoirs were built at Redmires, Rivelin and Loxley, the remaining dams at Crookesmoor were converted to service reservoirs to hold water prior to distribution to town. The original Hadfield reservoir was linked to Godfrey Dam which could also be (and was later mainly) supplied with water from the Loxley Valley. Misfortune Dam was supplied from Rivelin via a culvert and tunnel which ran along the Rivelin Valley, then over Crookes (near Bolehill Lane), down School Rd and Conduit Rd (hence the name) and into the dam. The conduit was abandoned in 1935. Ralph, Misfortune and New Dams were taken out of service in 1933 due to concerns over pollution and disinfectations

using chlorination was introduced at the remaining dams.

Even in the 1850's there was little development in the area other than Crookes which was a farming hamlet. Dam House was the only property in the immediate vicinity, with fish poaching and ice-skating as popular local pastimes. By the early 1900's the area was part of general urban expansion. Godfrey and Old Dam were not taken out of service until the completion of the new covered Hadfield Reservoir in 1951. The outlines of Ralph and Misfortune Dams are still visible when viewed from Narrow Walk; they are used as tennis courts and car parks as part of the Goodwin Sports Complex.

David Lyon

A Trip to the Palace

Roger received his MBE at an investiture at Buckingham Palace at the end of May. The Kite family had an "amazing day". Getting the award from Prince Charles was great because he takes such an interest in all thing conservation. They apparently talked for some time about the work of RVCG and numbers of volunteers. We were all encouraged to "keep up the good work".

Recorder July 2006

For anyone not experiencing the delights of Carver Fields this spring missed a most wonderful display of grasses, sedges and wildflowers and framed beautifully with the most gorgeous panoramic view of Rivelin Valley. I cursed and moaned at having to wake up an hour early to walk our new bearded collie pup but with the early morning sun rising in the East, it shone a warm glow right down the valley to provide a most uplifting experience. The fields have since been harvested by the Revitt family of Coppice house Farm as hay fodder. This has revealed a number of unsightly and smelly doggy doo doos which really spoil a pleasant walk. This is private land open to the public and dog owners should really be much more responsible. How can children possibly run around the field and roll

around in the grass with dog faeces strewn around. Mind you more could be done to remind dog owners of their duties. Suitable signs could be installed expressing who owns the fields how they wish the fields to be used, and the installation of a doggy toilet. As for doggy toilets, they are maintained by the council and cost about £7 a week I believe. I'm not sure the council will support them on private land anyway and who is going to pay the £7 a week? I have kitted myself out with a bum bag containing doggy training snacks and toilet bags although my dog, Megs, is yet to christen Carver Fields and seems to prefer the privacy of our own back garden.

Reports

For anyone familiar with our website, I broke it recently and hope to get round to fixing it soon. I'm afraid 8 hours a day at work behind a computer and good weather is making it difficult to do any computer work at home. Also the reporting function through the website has also ceased and I need to set up a new one. I can be emailed directly on grahamappleby@btopenworld.com or use one of the report forms to pass on any valley information that would interest our readers or any questions that we could try to answer.

Andy Hare on 16 April witnessed hundreds of bees emerging from individual holes in the ground. Possibly Carder bees (also known as Cuckoo Bee)? Definitely bumble bees of some sort.

Well Andy, its news to me that there are different species of Bumble Bee. In fact my web site tells there are 24 species found in the UK. This brown banded bee is rare in Britian so it would be a real swoop if they were Carder Bees. You must keep me posted of any future sightings along with a photograph possibly.

On a similar vein, I have had several wasps nets situated around my house and garden over the years, but one was built in my rabbit hutch this year which caused a bit of a stir with the rabbit being in such close proximity. I had to resort to drastic

methods and used a foam spray which worked quite successfully. Being an engineer, I have always been fascinated how wasps build their nests. I have witnessed wasps chiselling small strips of wood off brambles and twigs. This is chewed by the wasps and mixed with saliva and used to build their paper mache houses. I have even witnessed wasps at the entrance to their hive fanning their wings to cool the nest down. So destroying the nest in such a way was a bit gauling for me to say the least. Most of the wasps died but a half dozen or so that escaped, quite amazingly returned to try to restore the nest the following day.

Andy Hare continues:

Also on the same day, we saw a sparrow in our back garden. Literally the first one in the six years we have lived here in Waller Road (next to cemetery)

That is a surprise although sparrow populations have been in decline in the last few years. I have regular sparrows visiting my feeders and tits but I don't seem to be able to attract any finches. I have just installed a bird table in the hope of attracting a different variety of birds but to no avail as yet.

Other reports:

Joan Buckland Den Bank Close was observing a frog on her driveway one rainy night when a Tawny Owl swooped down and took it.

Margaret Sanderson was pleased to have a colony of newts in her garden pond.

A Hummingbird Hawk Moth was spotted during June. They are quite common in the summer months in Britain but migrate to southern parts of Europe as they cannot survive the winter here

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Howard Sanderson witnessed a couple of Tawny Owls sitting on a garage roof on

Marsh Lane late one evening.

Unfortunately they were there until the early hours of the morning making an awful din.

Back in April, Jo Flower saw Swallowtail butterflies at Underbank. There was also an excellent display of Blackthorne along Rails Road. Of concern was a swathe of dead gorse at Underbank.

We have regular back garden Badger sightings in Crosspool.

Our chairman, Roger Kite has been successful with his new niger seed feeder and has attracted Gold Finches to his garden.

sure we have adequate protection this year although the forecast looks good. Please contact Margaret Sanderson and bring your friends too.

Numerous butterflies have been reported this summer which may have something to do with the weather.

The bright yellow Brimstone was seen feeding on Margarets runner bean flowers

The dusky brown Gatekeeper butterfly common in hedgerows and grassy places. One of our larger butterflies, the Peacock with its four eyes painted on the corner of its wings. Also small coppers and commas are in abundance. Many of these were only found in numbers in the south of England but becoming popular further North with the milder weather.

I am also being bombarded by a number of species of moth having all the windows open because of the heat, and the light on.

Barbeque

Just picking up on Margarets note about the barbeque. Yes, the hide was vandalised but also Howard Sanderson made us a new barbeque out of half a barrel which worked superbly last year.

Unfortunately, this has also gone missing although it was on a metal frame and very heavy. This year we have created an area within the old tennis courts on carver fields. We can park on the fields and access will be much easier than the old allotment. Also we got a bit wet last year as the heavens opened right on 4pm, the start of the barbeque. We will make sure we have adequate protection this year although the forecast looks good.

As you probably know, a new farm foods shop was opened up at Coppice Farm, Rivelin Valley Road, earlier this year and is doing a roaring trade. This locally bred meat is of very high quality and we have decided to use this meat for the barbeque this year. There is a small increase in cost to £4 per person but are you in for a treat. Please contact Margaret Sanderson and bring along your friends too.

Please send your reports to: grahamappleby@btopenworld.com or use one of the forms attached previously. Enjoy the remainder of the summer and don't worry too much about the lawn. Keep it long. It will recover.

Graham Appleby