



Newsletter



Rivelin Valley Conservation Group

Winter 2012 no 81

Through The Chair

Hello and welcome to our winter issue. As most of us recover from the over-indulgence of Xmas, it's a good time to reflect on past events and to develop and prioritise new plans for the ongoing year. And that's exactly what the RVCG committee has been doing to create our programme of events for 2012. Please let me know if you have any suggestions. Our primary focus is with the task team and our continued maintenance of the Rivelin Valley. With around a dozen or more volunteers and just four hours each month, it is amazing just how much can be achieved through Keith Kendall's strategic planning and organisation.

The council cutbacks over the next few years are huge; with the support for volunteer groups being cut to the bone. This means the SCC will be much more dependent on groups such as ours for continuing our conservation work. As the RVCG does not depend on council funds but solely on our own members' contributions and any grants we can achieve then we can still function effectively.

In April, the RVCG celebrates its 21st anniversary and due to the success of last year's pea and pie AGM, I have asked that we repeat this again in April. I wish to encourage every active member to join in celebrating the achievements of the group over the past year.

We also need some extra help distributing posters and maintenance of our website. Please contact me if you are interested.

Graham Appleby RVCG Chairman

A Happy New Year to all our members

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MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Renewal of membership is now due. We are still only £3 per annum. Please use the enclosed form.

A few of you have already paid for this year and if you are a new member joining after September 30th 2011 then your membership also covers this year.

If you are in doubt about when you joined or if you have already paid, please contact M. Sanderson. See contacts list.

Why not persuade someone else to join our group?

Thank you to everyone for donating your time, skills, membership and money to make RVCG a success. We have now come of age being in our 21st year!

Donations

Once more you have been very generous to our group.

Thanks to Ward, Tetchner, Maas, Fletcher, Lofthouse and Cousins in this last quarter. All your donations with membership amounted to more than £600 last year and are a valuable help to our work in the valley.

This Newsletter is sponsored by Clarity Printers of Shepcote Lane, 0114248844, suppliers of office equipment.

Roger Redfern

From time to time you might have remembered articles by Roger Redfern which have been allowed to be reprinted here in this newsletter. Roger has recently died and will be remembered for the variety of local history and countryside books that he produced. The Guardian newspaper for which he contributed to 'A Country Diary' has allowed the following article to be reproduced here.

Rivelin

Not many people seem to come to this gritstone edge these days. Built of the same stuff of the longer edges at Stanage and Froggatt it's a pretty sort of spot, dotted with clinging holly, wind-bent oaks, heather tufts. The other day we came along the crest of the crags, leaning into a lumpy westerly gale. To our right lay the open fields sloping up to the 1,000ft contour, and the straggle of sheds at Russell's Moorwood Farm: on our left the space below the rock-edge dropped to bracken banks of Rivelin Rough. Then we came to the scoop or amphitheatre from the centre of which rears the greatest of all gritstone pinnacles, Rivelin Needle. It's almost a century since Puttrell came here and did battle with the Needle. Puttrell and Co did all sorts of things to get up this obvious prize through the years but never succeeded; even 60 years ago, when most of the routes on the edge had been put up, no-one had topped the Needle. It was one of the great unresolved goals of outcrop climbing. Early in the thirties combined tactics and some ingenious rope engineering landed the immortal Eric Byne and three mates on the untrodden summit. After leaving their names in a box they abseiled from the south-west corner, inspecting a possible route as they went down. The box was still intact two years later when a top rope was used to protect the second ascent.

Eventually in the spring of 1935, Eric Byne and Cliff Moyer got up without a top rope; two pegs safeguarded them, later removed. During the war a traversing ascent – the Spiral – was made, using a rope wrapped around the pillar for a handhold. At last though, in the spring of 1950, Rod Brown and two friends got up the Spiral without aid; one of the most drawn out of gritstone sagas was over! We left the Needle as the dark cloud rolls came on from the high moors, there were spots of rain in the wind blasts before we got to the shelter of coniferous giants in the ravine of Wyming Brook.

© Roger Redfern/The Guardian 6/2/93.

Note It is known that the famous Joe Brown climbed the Needle in 1954. The Rivelin Needle is on private land and permission has to be asked to use it.

Task Team News

Sunday 26th November 2011

On this Sunday we had a very good turn out and we made a start on erecting a fence at the far end of Rails Road pond.

The idea of this fence is to create a resting (and hopefully a nesting area) for the birds that use this pond. At the moment they are resting here and being chased off back into the water by dogs. Not having the fencing yet, we erected the posts and did a little in-planting within the area.

Whilst the main body did this a few of us repaired the notice board that had been hit by a careless driver, by replacing the broken leg and mounting the remaining stumps in front of the notice board to help prevent a repeat of this incident.

Once we completed these jobs, we moved onto the area of the new toilet block on the old post office site. Whilst these toilets have been in use for quite a while and the signs having been erected at Rails Road, no-one could get to them without having to go onto

Rivelin Valley Road and round the corner onto Manchester Road. Not ideal if you are less mobile.

We removed part of the wall behind the toilet block wide enough to get a wheel chair through and then re-surfaced the path. This surfacing was later finished by the Public Rights of Way Unit.

Sunday 7th January 2012

Not having had a Task Day at the end of December, a few of us decided on a nice leisurely walk down the river to clear the goits. That is what I told them anyway and the ploy seemed to have worked as we had a good turn out to say half of the team had been informed. (My apologies to the ones I usually telephone.)

A last minute change meant that we had been given two very large sacks of native daffodil bulbs which even though it is very late we needed to get them in, along with completing the fencing and erecting a bird table within the nesting area. The few of us still standing were sent down the nature trail to do an emergency repair on a footpath that had become flooded and was in danger of becoming 10m wide as the walkers went round it.

A good day had by all and my thanks to everyone who has helped over the Christmas period which from a personal point of view seems to have been quite busy for a quiet period.

Keith Kendal

The following is an account of the 7th January task day from a school student working with the group for the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme.

Chloe in the Community

Being a typical teenager, I'm usually wrapped up in school and social networking sites, an entirely different world to that of Rivelin Valley Conservation Group Task Team. I initially thought that doing the Duke of

Edinburgh volunteer work was going to be a tiresome struggle. I was half right, restoring the natural beauty of an area which was being destroyed by people who didn't care less was far from light work, despite my previous hang-ups, I thoroughly enjoyed giving something back to society, and the fresh air calmed my school stresses.

As soon as I arrived, I was summoned by a member to help clear a pathway that was covered in rocks and had become unstable and unsafe. We got to work straight away and I was baffled by how the task team took control of the situation. After only 15 minutes of heaving and hauling rocks, cutting down branches and smoothing out soil, the pathway was transformed. It was clear from the beginning that the task team's hard work, dedication and drive to maintain Rivelin's idyllic vegetation and wild-life was really making a massive difference, and for that I need to thank them; thank them for welcoming me whilst I learned to dig holes (I was extremely inexperienced) and for doing something that no-one else thought of doing: caring about and cherishing our local countryside. Also, I joined in planting teasels by the river because blue tits like the seeds. After finishing the pathway I went to observe what other people were doing. Some were building a fence and planting trees around a section of the river in order to keep dogs from disturbing the moorhens. Others were replacing the wooden legs of a notice board after a car had smashed into it, destroying the board and the vegetation around it. A few were maintaining the willow tunnel by tying bits of escaping branches to the tamer ones and I helped with this. But the most shocking, and by far the most unsettling was watching members of the task team shifting waste and debris

that people had disposed of by emptying their rubbish all over Rivelin's scenic shrubbery. It was extremely disheartening realising that some people simply don't care about the environment and what effect dumping their waste may have on local biodiversity. Luckily for us, the task team were there saving the day, repairing and replenishing.

I can conclude that it was a pleasure being part of the task team. I'm really looking forward to taking part in the near future. Thanks again for the wonderful day in the countryside; it gave me new skills and an extremely pleasurable and rewarding experience.

Chloe Youle

Wadsley and Loxely Commoner Events 2012

Saturday February 11th

Birds in Winter Rural lane Car Park 9am
No Dogs

Saturday February 25th

Practical working day on the common with the Rangers 10am – 12am

Monday March 26th Wadsley Church Hall

7.30pm

Railways in a Yorkshire Landscape

Stephen Gay

Wednesday May 16th

Local History Group Walk from Malin Bridge

7pm at the tram stop terminus.

Malcolm Nunn

Contact for all the above 01142335331

Some Recent RVCG Events

8th November 2011

'Mystery of Hallamshire – Howard Smith

This was an entertaining talk on the history of Hallamshire. This area once inhabited by the powerful Brigantes tribe but lost in the Roman invasion. At the end of Roman occupation around 400AD, it became part of Northumbria.

Before the Norman Conquest, Waltheof, with Viking ancestry was the Saxon earl of Hallam but was beheaded by King William. We learned of the fascinating archaeology reflecting the lives of those who have lived before us and of the name 'Hallam' which lives on in organisations, businesses and constituency.

10th January 2012

'Walking Set in Stone' Terry Howard

Terry is an outside person and encourages you to look around which is a good thing as we all need to look at our environment. One thing you see in abundance is rocks and everywhere you see them, in our buildings as well as out on the moors in rocky outcrops or our wonderful edges. Terry is expert at finding stone circles and ancient carvings. If the top Redmires Dam is low, take a look – you will see something of interest. Don't be tempted to wade in the mud – it's like quicksand. From standing stones to Celtic crosses and gravestones our area is full of the legacy of the past. In Toley churchyard there is a mass grave of smallpox victims and in our churches we find the pagan symbols of a man's face in stone with branches spouting from his mouth and finally we must not forget the iron and coal which is so much a part of our industrial history.

Come and join us at our future meetings– check your programme. Bring a friend; they do not have to be a member.

THE RECORDER

What a difference from last year, it has been more like Spring than Winter. October and November were very warm with temperatures in double figures for many days. We had some signs of winter during the first half of December and then milder weather over Christmas. This has meant that plants have continued to grow resulting in unseasonable blooming of many flowers. The spring bulbs are shooting up but are being nibbled by slugs and beetles which are still active on warmer days. If we do not get a prolonged cold spell we may have more garden pests this year than we would like. On the brighter side, birds and other animals will be surviving well in the mild weather, but if amphibians spawn too early they could be hit by late cold spells. Despite the mild weather it is important to keep feeding the birds – they have come to rely on this. It is also important to wash bird feeders and tables regularly to prevent diseases from spreading, especially if you have woodpigeons visiting the garden.

Jo Flower (Stannington) contacted me as she was curious about deposits she had seen on grassy banks during her walks around Stannington in November, which she described as 'like dog sick'. She actually dropped off a sample at my house. After examining this sulphurous gunge Paul (my husband) and I decided it was *Fuligo septica*, Dog Vomit Slime Mold., so Jo was very accurate in her description. Slime molds are very strange, they are placed in the kingdom Protista. They actually move like an amoeba at a rate of about 1mm per hour, ingesting organic material and growing. Dog Vomit Slime Mould starts off bright yellow, turning to white and then a dark brown, which

is the fruiting body. Jo also saw it at Stanage Pole and a friend noted it in the Rotherham area. Margaret Sanderson also noted it on Carver Fields.

It looks as though the geese are on the move. I heard some at 3 am on 14th January. These were probably Pink-footed Geese on their way to stop off at the Solway Firth. They are 4 days earlier than last year, so keep a look out as there should be more to come.

List of unseasonal flowers in bloom into the New Year

Bergenia, Hebe, Antirrhinum, Penstemon, Rose, Fuchsia, Quince, Campanula (rockery), Calendula, wild strawberry, Aстранtia, Kerria, Ox-eye Daisy, Geranium, Ceanothus, Senecio, wall flower, Nasturtium, fox glove, cherry, Feverfew, daisies, primroses, Polyanthus, Spiraea (Bridal Wreath), Marjoram, Rudbeckia, Alyssum, Aaena, Huchera, Persicaria maculosa (Redshank), red campion, broom, poached egg plant (in Stephen Hill church garden), Erigeron, Geum, Hypericum Hidcote), kaffir lily, wall valerian, Rhododendron, Pulmonaria., corn marigold, Candytuft, Clarkia, poppy, Gilia capitata, Periwinkle, ivy-leaved toad-flax, strawberry. Dandelions and groundsel also flowered in sunny spots.

Thankyou to Sally Turnbull, Graham Appleby and Sue Shaw for their lists of flowers.

Thankyou also for the following records:-

Sue Shaw (Lower Walkley Bank) – Sept. Sparrowhawk chasing a pigeon swooped low towards her in the garden.

Heard Tawny owl calling on 1st and 11th Nov.

Roger Kite S10 – 16.10.11 – female Great Spotted Woodpecker on fat balls (1st time seen). 2.1.12 – Pair of Kingfishers on Frank Wheel Pond. 8/9.1.12 – In garden a.m. – flock of Redpoll; 3 Goldfinch; 4 pairs Bullfinch; 3 pairs Chaffinch; 1 Brambling; 1 Robin; and Blue, Great and Coal Tits. A lot of activity there!

Joyce Green S6 – 9.10.11 - 15 – 20 Redwings off Rails Road.

Mavis Roadhouse S10 – 3.11.11 – Female Sparrowhawk eating wood pigeon in garden. Came back next day for more. Mavis took some good photographs of this event.

Margaret Sanderson S10 – Dec. Up to 100 Waxwings in poplars at bottom of garden. Moved on after a few days.

Joan Buckland S10 - Snowdrops fully out 12.1.12.

Dec/Jan – up to 10 blackbirds feasting on fallen apples.

Regularly in garden – Sparrows, Blue, Great and Coal Tits, 2 Robins, 5 Chaffinch, 3 Greenfinch, Jay, Dunnock, 2 squirrels (siblings from nest in our bargeboard), Fox.

Occasionally in garden – 1 pair Bullfinch, 2 Collared Doves, 1 pair Goldfinch,

Starlings, 2 Woodpigeons.

15.11.11 – 3 Fieldfares swooped low over garden but did not land when they saw me. Only sighting so far.

12.1.12 – Male Sparrowhawk swooped down garden and landed in apple tree.

9.1.12 - Woke early and heard nice dawn chorus.

Joan Buckland RVCG Recorder

You may have seen on the news recently about the unseasonal warm winter is bringing hedgehogs out of hibernation quite early. Half of all our hedgehogs have been lost in the last 25 years.

When did you last see a hedgehog?

One of the big problems with our gardens is that they are more often than not fenced off from our neighbours gardens. Although residential gardens form the biggest wildlife areas as a whole unfortunately most gardens are isolated pockets of individual wildlife areas which restricts the movement of the Hedgehog who like an area something the size of about twelve gardens to roam around in. You are probably already guessing a possible solution to assist this unique prickly mammal and that is to create small access holes along each of your borders for the hedgehogs to pass through. This small change can make an enormous difference to the lives of these small animals and don't forget their favourite food is the slug! So forget the slug pellets just open up your garden to the hedgehog.

The European hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*), common hedgehog or just hedgehog is found in northern and western Europe. They are nocturnal and insectivorous. There are 17 species in 5 genera across Europe, Asia, Africa and New Zealand and share distant ancestry with *shrews* with the *gymnures* being the intermediate link.

Graham Appleby