



Newsletter



Rivelin Valley Conservation Group

Winter 2014 no 89

Through The Chair

I hope you all had a wonderful Xmas. We're all still waiting for the snow to fall and no doubt it will arrive at a very inconvenient time for us all. Although with all the rain we have experienced maybe it's a good job it didn't fall as snow otherwise we would have been buried under some very deep drifts. Hope you all had a chance to join in the recent garden watch. It wasn't a particularly good weekend and all my regular garden visitors were nowhere to be seen and I could only report a few sparrows.

On New Year's Eve, Keith Kendall our task team leader received a phone call about a hole in the path around Hind Wheel. He went down to investigate and decided it was too dangerous to leave. Unable to contact any task team members, he used 12 bags of rubble and 3 bags of cement to repair the damage. Keith later received an accolade from Amey, the SCC contractor for his quick response and quality of repair. I understand Amey has since repaired a second hole in the same vicinity which is a worrying trend and a concern for the life of the dam.

For anyone attending my recent presentation on Bees, the word to describe heather honey is 'thixotropic'. It's normally a jelly like state but turns to liquid when agitated. A few requested more on honey bees which I am planning for the autumn.

We still require a speaker organiser for our open meetings. Please contact me if you are able to help. I look forward to meeting you at our future events.

Graham Appleby
RVCG Chairman

WE WISH ALL OF OUR MEMBERS A VERY HAPPY NEW YEAR

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RVCG Membership

Your membership for 2014 is now due. Please renew as soon as possible. It saves our volunteers from sending out reminders in the next newsletter also sometimes people who renew late in the year think they have renewed for the following year! Please use the enclosed form.

It is important that we keep up to date with your details - change of address etc.

If you were a **new** member, joining after 30th September 2013, then you are also a member for this year.

We are still very cheap – only £3 per household for a year.

Donations

Thanks for your generous help in keeping our work going.

Since the last newsletter we have had donations from Allen, Atter, Bruce, Hague, Mason and Sharpe.

Donations last year amounted to over £900 for which we are very grateful and helps to maintain our work in the valley. There might be many more collapsing footpaths, leaking dams and vegetation blocked paths without your help and the labour of our unsung heroes - the Task Force.

Rivelin Tunnel

Following the takeover of the Sheffield Water Company by Sheffield Council in 1888, it became apparent that new sources of water were needed to meet the growing demand for water. This was due to both the increasing population and a general increase in water usage. In 1898 the council promoted a bill through Parliament to utilise the watershed of the River Derwent above Bamford for water supply in an attempt to meet this demand.

The bill however was in competition with similar bills from the Corporations of Derby and Leicester and petitions from Nottingham and Derbyshire County Council for a share of the water. A compromise was eventually agreed to jointly form the Derwent Valley Waterboard (DVWB) to develop the resources. Sheffield was entitled to 25% of the available supply with Rotherham having an entitlement of 1/6 of Sheffield supply.

Whilst Howden and Derwent dams were being constructed a tunnel was driven from Bamford to Rivelin under the Bamford Edge to enable Sheffield to take its entitlement of water. The tunnel runs from Bamford, near the Ladybower Fish Farm and finishes at the Rivelin Lower Reservoir.

The tunnel through the Millstone grit rock and shale is 4.5 miles (7.2km) long with a gradient towards Rivelin of 1 in 3,600. It is 6ft (1.8m) wide and 6ft 6in (1.98m) high partly brick with cement lining where necessary. It was driven from both ends with no shafts using electrical power for drilling and ventilation. It was completed in 1910 in time for the completion of Howden Reservoir in 1912 and was the longest tunnel in the country for water supply. The cost was £135,000 some £13,000 under budget.

The water was piped from the Howden and later the Derwent Dam to the start of the tunnel and at the Sheffield end a tank was constructed adjacent to the Rivelin Lower Reservoir. The water flowed under gravity into the tank and then from the tank to the original Rivelin Filter Station via a 24 inch water main.

On completion of Howden Reservoir the initial flow through the tunnel was only of

the order of 2.5mgd (million gallons per day) but over the years as more water became available from the Derwent Valley the flow eventually reached 12.5 mgd plus an additional 0.5 mgd of infiltration water in wet weather giving a maximum flow of 13mgd (59 tcmd). The flows are regulated throughout the year dependant on the overall stock situation in the Derwent Valley Reservoirs which are now operated by Severn Trent Water Plc.

The Bamford end of the tunnel is not accessible to the public but the portal and gate at the Sheffield end can be viewed from the Wyming Brook Drive adjacent to the point of discharge of the Wyming Brook into the Rivelin Lower Reservoir. Surplus water can be seen discharging from the tank into the reservoir down the overflow weir.

A few years ago the tunnel gates were stolen but fortunately were spotted by a local Yorkshire Water employee for sale in a second hand shop in Sheffield. They were recovered and reinstalled at the tunnel entrance.

In the 1960's due to deterioration in water quality, the lower reservoir was adapted for pre-treatment sedimentation of the DVWB water and the filter station was supplied from draw-offs located along the reservoir embankment. Following the rebuilding of the treatment works in the late 1990's the water can now be drawn from both the original tank and the later draw-offs. Most of the water, after treatment, is used for drinking water supplies but a portion is used to maintain the compensation flow in the River Rivelin.

D K Lyon

Wanted

RVCG members usually come up with help when we need it. Janet Bowring will be retiring from her RVCG work soon and so now we will have a vacancy for the jobs she does. We need someone to arrange speakers for RVCG Open Meetings and for information on our activities to be sent to the press. Some Open Meetings are already arranged for this year. Perhaps there are two of you who would like to share this job.

If you are interested Janet Bowring or Graham Appleby will be willing to talk to you and give more information. (See contact list)

100th Anniversary of King Edward's Hospital 27th October 2013

Reminiscences of the old King Edward's Hospital in the newsletter led to interest from Jean Bruce, an RVCG member. She hosted a reunion in its imposing entrance hall of those with associations there before it was turned into residences. Several ex nurses were reunited and enjoyed seeing the many old photographs Jean had collected. Thank you to those who provided refreshments.

Some of you may remember in our early days the fight to stop this building becoming a secure unit in the prison service. A huge, factory like building was also going to be added in the grounds and so a neighbouring farm made a scaffolding mock up of its size in a field to show what an impact this would have on our valley. It's good to know that this wonderful historic hospital has been put to new use and appreciated by its residents.

I would still be interested if anyone has stories about Rivelin's hospitals, especially the Crimicar Lane Hospital that dealt with infectious diseases.

M Sanderson

Do come to our Open Meetings And why not bring a friend or family. They do not have to be members Wanted

Does anyone know of any existing cruck barn in our area?

Rivelin, an area once known for its oak trees had several cruck barns and perhaps there may still be one that has been incorporated into a later house or farm. Originally they would have a thatched roof and were supported by strong oak timbers and built from Saxon times onwards. Maybe the hall of Waltheof, the Saxon lord, who was thought to live in this area, was a cruck building. Perhaps it was the one known to exist at "The Wiggins" around the top of Crimicar Lane. Others were thought to exist at Parkside, Stannington and Lydgate. Also there were some in the neighbouring valleys of Fulwood and Loxley.

Please contact Margaret Sanderson.

Task Force News

Despite experiencing aching limbs, Rivelin mud, near drowning and wonky knees the Task Team plods on.

Recently trees have been planted in Walkley Bank, Carver Fields and Rails Road, thanks to a donation. More will be planted on the next Task Day. These consist of white, goat and crack willow, also crab apple, rowan, English oak, hornbeam and hazel.

Best wishes to Keith for a speedy recovery and back to full force.

Contact Keith if you would like to join the Task Team.

Open Meeting

Steve Drinkall - Images of Wildlife and Wild Places 12th November 2013

We saw wildlife photographs taken in Scotland and its islands by Steve (once an engineer at Laycocks).

The white tailed sea eagle with its 8ft wing span is the biggest bird in the British Isles now reintroduced from Norway because of extinction by egg collectors and shooting by gamekeepers in Scotland.

There was the wonderful curlew with its curved beak and plaintive call, the colourful oyster catcher that doesn't eat oysters and the red deer fighting for a hind.

The magnificent buzzard flew overhead and grey seals flopped around on the rocks all photographed in beautiful settings.

M Sanderson

We always want your stories in our newsletter. Many of you have interesting tales of Rivelin, whether it was as a child paddling in the river, catching tiddlers or on family walks.

Perhaps you are a keen dog walker, birdwatcher or perhaps you spotted something unusual. It doesn't matter how big or small are your reminiscences. We need your memories.

Also there must be some of you who have stories to tell of earlier days at Carver Fields long before it gained that name

Please contact Margaret Sanderson

The following information is taken from The Hunter Archaeological Society – of 31st May 2010.

The Rise and Fall of Holly in the Sheffield Region

References to the importance of Holly in our past can be found in place names. Whenever you see the word "hagg, hollin or holling" in place names (such as Hagg lane, Fox Hagg, Bell Hagg and various other places) you can be sure that there is an historical reason for this as these are old names for places where holly was cultivated and there are plenty of these place names in our area.

Holly was once an important item for animal fodder. (This might seem curious but the prickly lower leaves were not used. These are for the tree's defence. The upper leaves do not have prickles.)

The holly place names are associated with upland areas where there is poor pastureland and are scarce below 400ft or in limestone areas. Mostly they are in millstone grit and coal measure land.

In 1697, Abraham de la Pryme, a diarist said that in SW Yorkshire, Bradford and Derbyshire sheep are fed on holly leaves and bark, eaten more greedily than grass also that they are planted in great numbers.

There is a record of 1574 that "one hage of hollen at Bell Hagg letten to Phillipe Morton of ye Cloughe feilde for Vs a yeare."

In 1604 Thomas Smith paid 5s. for hollin in Bell Hagg.

"One messuage called Belhag and a hag of Hollin" was rented for £15 in 1690.

Agricultural changes meant that holly fodder was declining in use by the end of the 18th century.

When walking around Rivelin the holly legacy is easy to see. Look out to see if they have not been allowed to grow into a tree with a trunk and this might show that it was once planted for use as cattle fodder.

M Sanderson

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THE RECORDER 2013/2014

Winter

Here we are again with the start of a new year. It comes round much too quickly for me. I am writing this on the 13th January and so far it does not feel very wintry. We have had strong winds and heavy rain over the whole country with many areas being flooded for the second Christmas running, but only a handful of days with frost. I keep temperature records and we have only had eight days with a maximum temperature below 7 °C. since the beginning of December, which is the temperature at which plants can grow. The leaves are still on my outdoor Fuchsia plants, which is most unusual, and wasps were still buzzing round the Ivy flowers at the end of November. We must not be complacent though as, last year, the first snow fell on the 14th January.

On Christmas Day many flowers were still blooming including Nicotiana, Feverfew, Nerine, Pelargonium, Primula, Rose, Marigold, Winter Jasmine, Pink Campion, Periwinkle and Viola. My Snowdrops are almost out (the same time as last year) and the Daffodils are peeping through. The Magpies have been attacking my plum tree for nesting material and some birds are singing their Spring song – a little hasty maybe. The migrants have arrived and you may see birds in your garden that are not regular visitors i.e. Waxwing, Redwing, Fieldfare and continental Blackbirds. Siskin and Bullfinch will also appear more often, especially if it snows. I am still waiting for these exotic visitors to notice my Cotoneaster berries, which are very plentiful this year. The Blackbirds are gorging on them instead. The geese are on the move again –

probably Pink-Footed. Last year I had reports of geese flying North West from the end of October, but this year the first sighting reported was on Boxing Day. I saw a flock of about 100 at 11.45am on the 10th January and heard some going over at 9.30pm on the 12th January. They will have exhausted their food further south and are going to the Solway Firth before travelling on to Iceland or Greenland to breed. The foxes are also barking to attract a mate. Has anyone heard a Tawny Owl lately? They should have done well as there has been a plentiful supply of small mammals this year, which is why I am surprised I have not heard one for some time. I am getting very worried about the lack of Hedgehogs. If you have seen one PLEASE let me know. If you do have a Hedgehog please do not use slug pellets and try to persuade your neighbours not to use them also. They are one of the main reasons for the decline in these engaging little creatures.

What sort of a year did you have in your garden? Did you have more or fewer insects, birds, butterflies or animals. I would love to know your experiences of wildlife. Did anyone have that 'nature moment'. Mine came today (I needed something to kick start me into writing). I was gazing out of the kitchen window when a sudden movement caught my eye. A lovely little weasel was working its way back and forth along my stone wall, which is where I often see field mice. It did not catch anything and disappeared into the garden next door. Sometimes it is just a matter of luck of being in the right place at the right time – but I do spend an awful lot of time looking into my garden!

Thank you to all who sent in records.

Vivien Falshaw S10 – 26.10.13 – Song Thrush in garden.

Sue Shaw – 23.8.13 – Weasel near Frank Wheel; 29/9 & 6/10 – 2 Comma Butterflies in Hospital Field.
23/11 – 2 Dippers on lead goit of Upper Cut, just above S-bend. 27/9 – in garden in Walkley – 2 Long-Tailed Tits; 30/10 – 2 Wrens in garden.

Doreen Best S10 – 22.12.13 – 7 Redwings in cherry tree in garden for 2 days.

Roger Kite S10 – 5.1.14 – Blackcap; 12.1.14 – Goldcrest.

Margaret Sanderson S10 - 24.12.13 - 20-25 Waxwings in trees at bottom of garden; 7.1.14 – 8 bullfinches.

Graham Appleby S10 – 4 Waxwings in garden.

Joan Buckland S10 - Regular garden visitors – Sparrows, Blackbirds, Dunnock, 1 pair Robins, Chaffinches, Goldfinches, Greenfinches, Blue, Great and Coal Tits, Collared Doves, Wood and Feral Pigeons, Magpies. Occasional visitors – Jays, Jackdaws, Rooks, Goldcrest, Wren, Sparrowhawk, Bullfinches, Long-tailed Tits, Starlings.
15.10.13 – Brambling; 15.10.13 – Female Tawny Owl sitting in apple tree 10.15pm; 23.10.13 – Male Tawny Owl calling; 5.1.14 – 1 pair Siskin, 7.1.14 – 1 Redwing.

Joan Buckland
Recorder

