



Newsletter



Rivelin Valley Conservation Group

Winter 2015 no 93

Through The Chair

Welcome to 2015 and hope everyone had a good Xmas break. Apologies for this delayed newsletter but I lost all my data when my laptop crashed and unfortunately I didn't have a recent back up.

Catastrophe! Thank you to Dr Jonathan Frost of Fix-My-PC.net for his advice and a new hard drive. So just like data being lost from a computer, wildlife can easily be lost from its habitat. I would like to encourage everyone to not only back up their computer properly but to support conservation groups such as the RVCG to help protect wildlife habitats by preventing creeping urbanisation into Greenfield areas.

Following the successful re-launch of 'Walking in the Rivelin', Keith Kendall is planning for new mill markers to help walkers using the book as a guide to locate the old mills. We are looking at some fairly resilient (vandal proof), long lasting (recycled plastic) and simple to install (task team) posts embellished with the mill details and will also be looking for sponsors.

This is also the year of John Ruskin (1819-1900) the well known anthropologist who around 1871 created the Guild of St George to help make England a better place to live. The Guild has obtained a lottery grant to develop a 'Ruskin Heritage Trail' here in Sheffield connecting the 19th Century experimental farm at Topley, the Museum at Walkley, paintings made along the Rivelin trail and land crafts now being taught at Freeman College Stannington. Keep an eye open for events throughout the year.

Graham Appleby
RVCG Chairman

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Donations

Many thanks for your generous donations to RVCG from Marriot, Cossham, Harwood. White, Porter. Tingle, Andrew, Frith and White. Apologies if I have forgotten anyone.

Also welcome to new members who have joined since the last newsletter. Please remember to send your wildlife observations to our recorder Joan Buckland.

Membership Renewal

Yes it is time to renew your subscription to RVCG. If you are a new member, joining after 30th September 2014, then you are also members for this year and membership remains at £3 per household. Please ensure you quote your surname and the forenames of your family members so that we can distinguish between members with the same surname. Please avoid sending coins through the post after an incident when they were scattered around after the envelope burst on being pushed through the letter box. I would also like to thank our members who include a donation which helps keep the basic membership at £3.

Also the RVCG welcomes your own Rivelin stories for this newsletter. Many of you

have lived in this area for years and perhaps have tales of paddling or fishing in the valley or family walks. Have you heard of any ghostly tales as well and we would like to hear of them? One involved a coach and horses on Rivelin Valley Road but this seems impossible as the road was not built until the early 20th century.

Also does anyone have an ancestor or who knew of someone who helped to build the road? I believe that the job was given to unemployed men and some of them had to fight for the work.

Margaret Sanderson

Sheffield Replanned

In 1945 the Sheffield Town Planning Committee published its ambitious proposals for the development of the city. Much of the 74 pages are taken up with detailed plans for the town centre, including a grandiose civic square bordered by the City Hall, Town Hall and new Law Courts. From the west this would have been approached by 'a fine new street with gardens at each side' to be called 'New Chester Street'.

However, what is more interesting from the perspective of the Rivelin Valley are the proposals for an outer ring road around the west of Sheffield. From Meadowhead, this is shown following the line of Greenhill Avenue, Abbey Lane and Whirlowdale Road meeting Ecclesall Road South at a new roundabout. From this point a totally new road would drive across open countryside to reach Ringinglow Road before descending into the Porter Valley via Common Lane and Ivy Cottage Lane. After somehow traversing the River Porter, the route continues up through Fulwood along the current alignment of School Green Lane, Moorcroft Road, Hallamshire Road and Carsick Hill Road before reaching Sandygate Road.

From here the route gets even more interesting, heading down Coldwell Lane and half way down Hagg Lane before

shooting off across open countryside (apparently cutting across Long Lane and Hagg Hill) to reach Rivelin Valley Road. The intended width of the road is described as 'generous' with a 'parkway treatment along the more rural stretches'. Rather optimistically, the plan states that 'it is hoped the road will conserve or enhance existing amenities'!

Even a single carriageway road in a parkland setting (along the lines of Abbey Lane to the east of Abbeydale Road South) would have resulted in the acquisition and demolition of many houses. In places the gradients would have been pretty challenging, leading to some significant engineering works. Certainly, there would have been a transformation in the character of Fulwood, Sandygate, Den Bank and the Rivelin Valley. I wonder how this would have been received in the 1940s and 50s!

I have no idea how far this proposal got or when it was formally dropped. However, I understand from a Crosspool resident that the Council did start to buy up properties along Coldwell Lane in the 1960s, including the farmhouse next to the former model dairy which was subsequently demolished. In addition, Hallamshire Road, with its very wide grass verge looks suspiciously like someone had a parkway in mind. There is also a post on the Sheffield History Forum suggesting that public notices were posted when the route was formally abandoned advising that the 'planning blight' was now being lifted.

So Sheffield has no western outer ring road and instead a myriad of small suburban and rural roads accommodate what the 1945 plan forecast as being largely 'inter-suburban light traffic'. If anyone knows more about how close the road got to being built or when and why it was formally dropped, please contact the editor.

Many thanks to the above contributor.

Rivelin in Poetry

This is part of a longer poem (one version), written in 1886 by Ebenezer Elliot, the Sheffield Corn Law poet.

"Oh that I were a primrose,
To bask in the summer air!
Far, far away from all the plagues that
make
Town dwelling men despair.
Or like a rainbow laughing
Oer Rivelin and Don
When misty morning calleth up
The mountains one by one."

Some years ago RVCG contributed more primroses to the valley by planting some on Carver Fields!

More Information on 'The Towers' Sandygate Rd

'The Towers' on the corner of Sandygate Road/Coldwell Lane, after being vacated by Spear and Jacksons became a special needs school. Around 1964/5, boys from this school planted trees along the allotment path that slopes down to the right near the top of Hagg Lane. The following was sent by John Hayes who worked at The Towers in the early 1960's.

After working for four years in Surrey which I enjoyed, I spotted an advert in a London paper which advertised a Public Health position Sheffield. This interested me and I wrote to Dr Roberts, Sheffield Public Health Officer and within a short time I received information regarding a newly set up service in need of a senior Technical Officer to help set up and organise this new department.

I was quite interested and put in my notice to the Surrey job. Six weeks later I was in Sheffield, working with a newly appointed health Education Officer Francis St Dominic Rowntree, a splendid public speaker and lecturer. This was the beginning of six enjoyable years as a technical officer working within the newly set up Health

Education Service.

After six years, I was sounded out for being in charge of "The Castle on the Hill", better known as The Towers Training Centre, recently acquired by Dr Llewellyn Roberts, the city's Public Health Officer.

This was a new opportunity coming my way, setting up educational opportunities for the outflow of young people leaving the Sheffield Special School system. The Towers supplied this for them along with other brain damaged people. The Towers soon became overcrowded and it was decided other services were needed so four other facilities were quickly brought in. The boys did contract work constructing items such as wall ties for Gleeson's and enjoyed playing football and cricket in the beautiful grounds.

I spent two happy years there before being advised to take up a special course in Hull University. After the successful end of this course I returned to Sheffield to be stationed at Woodside Assessment Unit under the brilliant head, A New Zealand lady, Mrs Robin Elder who set up the standards that she thought was needed.

Thank you to John Hayes for adding to the history of The Towers. If anyone has associations with this then please contact Margaret Sanderson

Some Recent Events

26th Oct 2014 – Graham Appleby -The Honey Bee

This was our second excursion into the lives of bees and here are a few facts that we learned –

Bees cannot hear – they detect sounds through their vibrations.

They cannot see the colour red but can see ultra-violet.

Bees are able to walk upside down.

Up to 50,000 honey bees in a colony.

Farmers are encouraged to leave wild flower borders around their fields.

The cuckoo bumble bee lays her eggs in a bee nest and the worker bees raise them

as their own.

After a bee stings, it usually dies. Some people can go into anaphylactic shock after being stung. If you are stung use an ice pack or antihistamine. If showing any unusual reaction then seek medical advice.

Bees love rose bay willow herb, poppies, borage, heather, clover and ivy. A bee makes about one twelfth of a teaspoonful of honey in its short life. They have a special dance to tell other bees where to find nectar.

Honey does not decompose and some was found in an ancient Egyptian tomb, still edible.

The sole purpose of a male bee is to breed and then it dies.

Bees swarm naturally and if you experience this, (it sounds like a jet plane descending on you), and need some advice then contact Graham Appleby or go on the BBKA website where you can enter your post code and obtain local swarm collectors details.

11th November 2014 – Peter Mason – Sheffield in the 1890's

This was an entertaining night with photos of Victorian Sheffield largely from Sheffield Photographic Society archives.

It was fascinating to see old style gas lamps, horse buses, ladies in long dresses and gentlemen in top hats, also Sheffield's working men in flat caps and waistcoats walking in cobbled streets. Trams were everywhere and ran up the middle of the road. We saw the decorations for Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee and the still existing Queen's Head public house. Who can remember the Yorkshire Penny Bank and St Paul's church, bombed in WW2 that stood where the Peace Gardens are now.

Margaret Sanderson

Task Team News

A small team of hardy volunteers had another go at laying the hedge on Carver Fields and we nearly are at the stage where we need to stop and let the second section grow a bit more.

Sunday 25th January should see us complete this task for a couple of years. Well done to all who turned out to burn off some Christmas excess.

Keith Kendall

**This newsletter is sponsored by:
Clarity Printers of Shepcote Lane.
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**Please remember to renew your
RVCG membership**

The Recorder

As I write this article it certainly feels like winter. The rain is lashing down and the wind is howling – when is that wind going to drop? We have had yet another year of unusually mild weather. We had the warmest Halloween recorded at 20 deg. and on the 9th January, on our way back from Cheshire, the car recorded a temperature of 16 deg. I saw Red Admirals, bees and wasps still flying at the end of October, saw our Noctule flying round the house on the 16th October, and I even heard a frog croaking in my garden on the 23rd November. We almost had a white Christmas with about 15cm of snow falling on Boxing Day, causing chaos round Sheffield. It did not snow long and thawed very quickly, but the young people made the most of it whilst it lasted.

I have only had one reported sighting of winter migrants from Brian Harrison, who says he saw about 30 Waxwings on the Bole Hills on the 11th November. This is probably due to the mild weather and plenty of food still in Scandinavia. There is still the chance of real winter weather to come so keep your eyes peeled for these visitors. My most recent nature moment was seeing 4 Robins, evenly spaced on the same branch in my back garden, on the 30th December. It was a very fleeting experience with no time to take a photo. I think my favourite moments of the year were coming face to face with the beautiful little vixen who visited my garden regularly. My worst moment was hearing that a Heron had become entangled in a discarded fishing line on Wolf Dam and died, on the 16th October. Please keep your eyes open for discarded fishing lines and let us

know so that we can try to collect them. It makes me so angry that our precious wildlife is so often threatened by thoughtless behaviour. I hope we all have more beautiful nature experiences in the coming year. Please let me know when you see your first Snowdrop and Daffodil. I have already seen a Dandelion in flower on the grass verge on Manchester Road.

Thank you to all who send in their records:-

Doreen Best , S10

28.9.14 – early morning saw a Kingfisher near Wolf Dam and Buzzard flying over at the same time.

29.9.14 – saw 2 Kingfishers, one flying along Wolf Dam and the other perched by Swallow Wheel Dam. Doreen has also seen Dippers recently.

15.10.14 - saw 2 Herons standing in the river about 4pm, and then on the 16.10.14, at 7.30am, one Heron floating on Wolf Dam (Keith confirms this had been tangled in a fishing line).

Vivian Falshaw S10

27.10.14 – Female Pheasant in garden in Den Bank Cres.

Gillian Drinkwater S10

4.11.14 – saw a long skein of about 150 geese flying very high overhead but still audible, at 2.30pm. They were flying SE over Dransfield Close.

5.11.14 also heard another skein at 5.40pm on a full moon. They were calling to each other until fireworks exploded and then Gillian says ‘they yelled at each other’. No wonder, they must have felt very threatened

Bob Whittaker

9.11.14 – Saw a Kingfisher downstream of Rails Road car park fishing in one of the ponds.

Margaret Sanderson S10 – Many garden birds and corvids in her well-stocked garden. Margaret put bread on her garage roof and noticed a Crow trying to peck the hard crust with little success. It then picked up the crust and went to a puddle where it turned it over and over until a piece broke off. Margaret is also a keen vegetable grower and dug a trench and began to fill it with vegetable peelings, which is a recommended way to grow runner beans. The next day the peelings were scattered all over so Margaret covered the trench with soil only to find that the following day the same thing happened. Was the wily fox to blame?

Sue Shaw – Sept. heard young owls on Walkley Bank: 21.9.14 – 2 speckled wood at Havelock and 1 speckled wood at Roscoe Bridge: 25.9.14 and 5.11.14 – 8 Long-tailed Tits – Walkley Bank: 3.10.14 – Red Admiral – Walkley Bank: 19.10.14 – Heron at Nether Cut, and 25.10.14: a Heron by the Rivelin chair sculpture: 2.11.14 – Buzzard flying up the valley.

Joan Buckland S10 – As well as recent regular visits by a Wren and 2 Goldcrests I had the following birds visit the garden on the 27.12.14, the day after the snow fell. 2 pairs Bullfinch, 3 Blackbirds, 10 Sparrows, 1 pair Chaffinch, 4 Magpies, 2 Dunnock, 2 Robins, 1 Jay, 5 Jackdaws, 3 Rooks, 2 Blue Tits, 1 Great Tit, 1 female Blackcap; 28.12.14 – 2 Goldfinches: 23/24/25.11.14 – heard a female Tawny Owl, and saw a Tawny at 1.45am on 7.12.14..

Joan Buckland
Recorder 12.1.15

Chairmans Honey Bees

In spring last year I decided to use my single hive to create a second. This is done in the early summer season when the bees show signs of swarming by building special queen cells. As soon as the first queen cell is sealed, the old queen and her flying bees swarm to find a new home. This is roughly half the hive population of 40 – 50,000 bees. Therefore the 20,000 remaining will be young bees that have nursing and cleaning duties and many will soon become foraging bees collecting nectar, pollen, water etc. The trick here is for the beekeeper to put the old queen in a new hive on the same spot therefore she thinks she has a new home and may change her mind about swarming - although not guaranteed! The old hive is moved to a new location full of the young bees and the queen cells. The first queen to be born will find the other queen cells and kill the occupant. This is the only time in her life that she uses her sting. She will then fly out to mate with about 15 drones on the wing and return to the hive. She now has enough sperm to fertilize up to 2000 eggs a day in spring and summer for the rest of her life of about 3 years.

Graham Appleby