



# Newsletter



Rivelin Valley Conservation Group

## Autumn 2016 no 100

### Through The Chair

Welcome to the 100<sup>th</sup> edition of the RVCG newsletter which by no coincidence is while we are also celebrating our 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. I've been with the group for almost 20 years and the format has changed very little in all that time. Most of the newsletters have been written by Margaret Sanderson and so I thought it would be a good time to write a brief article about Margaret's life in Crosspool which is included in this newsletter.

The RVCG committee continue to work closely with the Sheffield Council regarding the felling of trees in the Valley which has become incredibly sensitive with fierce opposition ignited by the Ruslings Road saga. There is some legitimate tree maintenance taking place in the Valley and Walkley Bank but the trees adjacent to the Park and the Fire Station are still waiting a decision from the Independent Tree Panel. The other major challenge we faced was the proposal to hold back flood water in all the Sheffield Valleys using a series of dams. A couple of monstrous dams in the Rivelin (and three in Loxley) does not really appeal. Trying to find viable alternatives has been very challenging and I again want to thank Dr Sue Shaw for the tremendous work she did in compiling the RVCG's response to the Council. As a consequence we have seen our membership increase to around 250 households and as we enter 2017, the RVCG will continue to vigorously challenge planning applications where appropriate and to support proposals that help preserve the Rivelin Valley for future generations.

Graham Appleby  
RVCG Chairman

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### Donations

Thanks for donations to RVCG to the following- Birkett, Brash, Byrne, Clark, Eastaway, Green, Loasby, Moseley, Neal, Parker, Sharkey G Sharpe, Warrender and Wildig.

Your donations are very welcome.

### Task Team News

A big thank you to the team that turned out on this morning. We had a great morning clearing the small pond area opposite the entrance to the Rivelin Park. This is an area not used by many people, even some of our own team didn't know it was there but it is an area vital to the wildlife on that side of Rivelin Valley Road trying to access water without crossing the road. What a difference a few hours made as the whole area has been transformed.

The ownership of this bit of land has always been in question with the Council and the Church, both refusing to admit to ownership. I bet if I started to build a house on it someone would soon claim it.

It now appears that this land does belong to the church. It was bought in 1922 as an extension for the graveyard but never used.

**Keith Kendall**

Would you like to join the Task Team? Keith would love to see you. There are jobs for everybody. You don't have to be a navvy.

We thank **Valleyside Garden Centre** for their continuing support for RVCG. Also many thanks to all our newsletter organisers, deliverers and behind the scene workers for their continuing support.

### **Memories of Rivelin**

My first memory of a Rivelin inhabitant was before I started school was meeting farmer Guite, who was a dairy farmer in the valley with his sister, and he delivered milk with his horse and cart to us in Trusswell Avenue. I remember him dipping a stainless steel container into his churn and pouring it into my mother's jugs; the smell of fresh milk stays with me. A few years later, after we had moved to Den Bank Crescent, when I was on Manchester Road coming home from Lydgate Lane School, with a friend, we threw snowballs at his van. he caught us and put us in the back, closing the doors before driving away. We kept well clear of him after that. My brother, sister and I often went down Den Bank to the river and Hind Wheel dam, We started these expeditions when we were aged 9,7 and 3 years old and our mother was happy to let us go on our own; maybe she wanted time on her own. However she had warned us to keep clear of certain "oddities" which she knew of and we did. I remember the minnows and sticklebacks in the dams. There were tadpoles, multitudes of little frogs at times and an occasional trout in a goit which could sometimes be caught by hand. We explored tunnels looking for fish and trying to avoid wet feet and bumped heads, We often took our cousins down Rivelin and usually came back home with wet feet to face trouble. Another learning experience on a winter's day was walking on and making a slide on the ice on Hind Wheel dam. At the end of the slide I heard a cracking noise, saw open water and just managed to scramble to thicker ice: I told no one. We flew gliders from Den Bank, were amazed how fast the runners ran down the rocks on the annual steeplechase, watched swallows in summer and picked bilberries which went into bilberry and apple pies. I used to walk with my maternal grandfather further up the valley to the packhorse bridge and back along the old

road to Burnt Stones. One day below the packhorse bridge, he pointed out a dark, deep pool where he said that a soldier had drowned and this frightened me. I was with him when I first saw a Kingfisher and he also introduced me to sardine sandwiches, which I still like. In the morning of 2 July 1958, when I was sitting my last GCE O level exam, there were very heavy thunderstorms. In the afternoon I went down the valley and saw the power of flood water. The riverside path was impassable and washed away in places but I got to the footbridge, from where the path leads south to Manchester Road, to see a floating log hit and bend the services pipe attached under the bridge; it remained bent for many years. I moved away to work in Cambridge and there were occasional visits until my mother moved to Bristol in 1984 then a long gap. My brother, sister and I scattered our mother's ashes at the top of Den Bank in 2011 and walked down to the dam. We were surprised to see how wooded the south side was. We remembered few mature trees and a lot of Holly from our visits as youngsters. By an amazing coincidence, our youngest son and his wife came to work in Sheffield from down south and they moved to Walkley. Now, my wife and I are enjoying our regular visits, often going to the play area, cafe and further upstream. Our Sheffield grandchildren are the sixth generation of the family to live in the area. I have thoroughly enjoyed writing this, with the re-living of so many happy memories of a well maintained, beautiful area.

David Hetherington

Many thanks for these memories. If you have any memories of Rivelin, we would like to know. Please send them to M Sanderson (see contacts).

### **Annual RVCG Garden Party**

Once more we had our annual get together. Our first few barbecues were on an allotment site off Hagg Lane in very primitive conditions so Ken's lovely garden is a big improvement. The weather was good (as it always has been on this day). There was lots of food and we thank everyone who brought cakes. Pauline made

the cole slaw and Joan the couscous. Keith managed the BBQ. Joan and self made sandwiches, Chris saw to the salad and Graham organised the drinks. Strange – the pickled onions all disappeared but hardly anyone ate the gherkins! Hope to see you next year.

### **Open Meetings**

#### **13thSept –a slide show by Stephen Gay on the Penistone to Sheffield Railway;**

This was the second part of the building of the cross Pennine railway, this time from Penistone to Sheffield.

This section was put off until 1948 because WW2 intervened and completed in 1954 but until July 1981 it was for freight only. Stephen walked the line with his faithful friend, Thunder – his dog.

At Penistone station there are “coal drops”, a legacy from when everyone used coal. Various merchants could store coal here ready for delivery to homes. Penistone station had seven platforms and in 1984 came electrification. The railway passes Emley Moor, then the highest free standing structure in the country, then over Silkstone Common to Dodsworth.

Then, a descent to Woodhouse follows, passing an inscription where a navvy was killed by a falling stone.

At Wortley the Earl of Wharnccliffe had his own private waiting room.

On the nearby Stocksbridge bypass, 28 people were killed and their ghostly figures are said to be seen at night.

There are reports of children singing, hooded monks and a terrified policeman.

The journey continues to Stocksbridge, Deepcar and Oughtibridge, then on to Sheffield via Spital Hill and “Five Arches”, built in 1848.

A reminder of how important this line once was is the Victoria Hotel where those trading in the goods provided by the industries of Sheffield would stay.

Stephen has interesting facts – more people travel by rail now than at the start of WW1.

M Sanderson

If you haven't so far please come to our Open Meetings. Anyone can come – you

don't have to be a member. Bring a friend Entry for members is £2 and non-members £2.50. This also includes a cup of tea or coffee and biscuit.

### **Why not persuade someone else to join RVCG?**

#### **Blackberries**

Michaelmas Day was on the 29<sup>th</sup> September and the last day that you can pick blackberries if you are superstitious. After this they are said to be touched by the devil.

Rivelin has plenty of blackberries but do people pick them now? The wild blackberry is certainly has a better flavour than the cultivated Himalayan Giant but both have the fiendish backward facing thorns that embed themselves in your flesh, It also has the amazing ability to travel and not only by its seed. The new shoots can leap in huge arches until its tip reaches the ground and starts new growth. This is specially designed to trip you up. Is there anyone left who makes blackberry jam or jelly?

#### **A Rivelin Fact.**

Land around the Lawns Farm area could have been granted to a retiring auxiliary Roman soldier. They were not returned to their home after their service as the ships that brought them here returned with booty such as tin from mines in Derbyshire. Instead they were given land and finished up as farmers. A Roman Diploma that proved he owned the land was found near Lawns Farm and now it is in the British Museum. It was given to them to prove that the land was theirs. Why isn't it in our museum? A few years ago, I visited the British Museum and it was in storage.

#### **Ash Die Back Disease**

This was first discovered in the UK in 2012. It is thought to be as devastating as Dutch Elm disease. However an ash has been found in Norfolk has strong tolerance to the disease. The tree is nicknamed Betty and scientists are working on its genetics. Although other ash trees around it have died “Betty” lives on.

The next problem aimed at ash trees is the emerald ash borer beetle. It is moving

through Russia and is regarded as a top UK risk. This has already destroyed many USA ash trees. A threat was imported firewood but this is now but is now regulated and inspected.

Ash trees are associated with many species of fungi, insects, birds and animals that would also suffer if we lost the ash.

#### **Rare Elms Found**

Holyrood Palace in Edinburgh is the home of two rare elms. These are Wentworth Elms known as *Ulnus Wentworthi*. They were discovered during a survey and are believed to have survived because Edinburgh council destroyed many trees suffering from Dutch Elm disease so the disease could not pass on.

The palace archivist discovered that they arrived in the garden in 1902 from Germany.

Trees of all kinds are important to many species both living on them and nearby. The Woodland Trust hopes to plant 64 million trees in the UK as we are the least wooded place in Europe.

#### **Also Under Threat**

A government survey says that 10% of our dry stone walls have been lost since 1984. Frequently they are not repaired and barbed wire fences are cheaper to maintain. Dry stone walls act as windbreaks and shelter for small creatures and the National Trust runs working holidays to repair them.

#### **RVCG is in its 25<sup>th</sup> Year**

What did we have in our early newsletters? November 1995 saw us on a Fungus Foray in Blackbrook Woods. It was "do it yourself" as we did not have an expert, but armed with books, we identified many species. We found *Russula*, Birch Polyphore, Honey Fungus Bracket Fungi and a Death Cap. We could not identify many of the small ones.

In 1996 a joint Sorby/RVCG moth watch discovered over 40 species of moths in the Packhorse Bridge area.

Privet was removed from Lower Hagg Wood and in November we learned that Rivelin Post Office was under threat.

Westbourne Cub Scouts made nest boxes and we helped to fix them in Upper Hag

Woods.

A Sheffield Planning Officer with the CPRE said that the "horsey culture" was creating piecemeal structures that encroached on the countryside. Sheffield Planning Department said they made every attempt to keep buildings in keeping with the environment.

At Loxely, waste paper was being spread as fertiliser on fields. The hill turned blue. It was said to be "agricultural improvement" but the farmer was asked to remove as it turned out to be toxic.

**Please contact Margaret Sanderson if you have anything to say in this Newsletter.**

#### **The Recorder**

As I sit here pondering what to write, it is a typical misty, wet autumn morning. The leaves are beginning to fall after a few colder nights. Temperature records have again been broken with 13<sup>th</sup> September being the hottest day of the year in some places of the UK, and the hottest September overall for 100 years. I recorded 22° C in the shade. There are still lots of flowers in bloom for the few remaining bees, wasps and hover flies to feed from. My ivy has plenty of flowers to keep them going until the frosts arrive. I have only seen the occasional coloured butterfly in the garden this autumn. Masses of Peacocks and Tortoiseshells on the Buddleia are a distant memory. The weather was quite warm and sunny from the middle of August and through September and I had a flurry of Speckled Wood butterflies with four on the 12<sup>th</sup> September. There was an interesting programme on the Painted Lady on the TV. They fly here from Morocco, a distance of 2000 miles, with the latest brood returning there for the winter. According to the programme, it has been a good year for the Painted Lady but I only saw one in my garden, on the 21<sup>st</sup> June. Did anyone else see one? Please let me know if you had any butterflies and how it compares with previous years. There is a lot of bird activity in the garden with the Rooks, Jackdaws and Magpies becoming more

evident. It is fun watching them on the fat balls, but they are costing me a fortune. Many birds had second broods and I saw Goldfinch, Blackbird, Blue Tit and Sparrow feeding young well into August. Small birds are flocking and good numbers of Goldfinch, Sparrows and mixed Tits are flying around. Pink-footed Geese are on the move so keep your ears and eyes open for them. The last time I saw Swallows going south was on the 28<sup>th</sup> September. Buzzards are also becoming more frequent over the valley. On 2<sup>nd</sup> October, when I was at the RVCG's stall to inform people about the proposed flood defences, I saw three Buzzards overhead. One was hassling the other two who then flew away together. The proposed flood defences will cause much disruption to the valley, with the construction of dams up to 11m high. Wildlife does not like change. Creatures are territorial and know their area inside out, and if anything happens to change this they will try to find a more suitable habitat. This is not always possible and they might die as a result. I am particularly concerned about Kingfishers and Dippers, which we are extremely lucky to have in our valley. Neither of these birds is abundant as they are restricted to a particular environment that is constantly under threat from human intervention. Kingfishers are easily disturbed and have been given the highest protection under Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Let us hope that this is enough to ensure we keep this most colourful of our birds in our valley. This year is a good year for Beech mast, which should fatten the Bramblings up over the winter- if the squirrels do not get it first! Will the Redwing, Waxwing and Fieldfare make it to our shores this year to eat the abundant supply of Rowan and Cotoneaster berries? I hope so, even if it means we might have some cold weather. Let me know if you see any.

Thank you for the following records:-

G Eastaway S6 – Sept. 2016 – says 'last summer 3 chub, 14" or more in length, in the very shallow water at the inlet end of the lowest pond above the fire station (Havelock?). Two are back this year finning quietly in the same spot, undeterred by walkers, runners, even fishermen on the

adjacent path.

Gillian Drinkwater - 10.10.16, 9.15am - saw 2 skeins of geese flying very high in easterly direction above Dransfield Close. First group of about 40 then straight after another of about 15, all calling to each other

Heather Sharpe S10 –Sept.2016 – Heather has a query about a plant called Bristly Oxtongue (*Helminthotheca* (= *Picris*) *echioides*). She says "I found it as a rosette not unlike teasels and transplanted it to under my apple trees, where it has grown to 6-7 ft, with many branches, and surprisingly turned out to have hawkweed flowers!! Leaves are very bristly". I'm keeping the dandelion-like fruits to sow again. It is a biennial, flowers late July – September. I am a botanist and have never seen it previously.' Has anyone seen this plant locally?

These plants belong to the daisy family. The Bristly Oxtongue prefers calcareous clay soils and is distributed accordingly. I have noticed in the last few years that many yellow tall daisy-like flowers have become very common along road verges, including motorways, and wonder if this has enabled the plant to spread more. For the last two years I have had Smooth Sowthistle (*Sonchus oleraceus*), which is much more common nationally. I think it arrived when we had a new drive laid and new soil in the borders. The flowers of both plants are very pretty but they have to be kept in check otherwise they spread very rapidly.

Joan Buckland  
13.10.16

# Margaret Sanderson – Her life in Crosspool

Not only is the Rivelin Valley Conservation Group celebrating 25 years this year but this newsletter is also number 100. All but about three of these newsletters have been written by Margaret Sanderson who is also celebrating 25 years on the RVCG committee. For all that time she has been the main RVCG Newsletter Editor and up until very recently, the Membership Secretary. I asked Margaret a little bit about her life.



**Margaret Age 9**

Margaret was born on Ringstead Crescent, Crosspool, Sheffield and just in time to witness the Second World War as a child. So trips down the garden to the cold damp air raid shelter are quite a vivid memory enhanced by the foul smelling chickens her father kept during rationing and Margaret would hold her nose and hold her breath as she passed them. On the 12 December 1940, the air raid shelters saved the lives of several family's as a German war plane passed overhead and probably just offloaded its remaining bombs from a bombing raid in Sheffield,

one of them struck a direct hit on a neighbour's house at No.22. This pair of semis was completely demolished and much of the glass was blown out of the surrounding houses and many roofs were damaged.

Margaret went to live with her Uncle George at Tapton Bank until her home was repaired and liveable once again. Fortunately Winston Churchill had encouraged everyone to take out air raid insurance and Margaret's family were able to eventually return to their home where the downstairs windows were repaired with the only glass available at the time which was frosted. Uncle George was a WW1 veteran seriously injured when shrapnel passed up through his leg and out through one of his shoulders. This could have easily been the end of him but he was miraculously saved at the hands of an experienced surgeon who took great care of him. Uncle George refused to have any limbs removed and although badly disfigured, he lived to a ripe old age. Margaret remembers that after the war, he managed to get around on a Corgi motor scooter which had been designed to be air lifted and parachuted to British troops fighting in Italy during WW2 and sold off cheaply after the war.

Her mother died at the young age of 44 when Margaret was just 6 years old and her older sister 16. Fortunately her grandmother and an aunt lived just next door and helped her father, who she thought the world

of, provide a good stable and happy upbringing. Her mother was one of seven children and her father, Margaret's grandfather, was a cabinet maker for the Prince of Wales during the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century and made some of the furnishings for the Princes hideaway in the South of France. Margaret has bedroom furniture made by her grandfather and he also made a special desk for the Lord Mayor of Sheffield although its current location is unknown.

Margaret's father was born in Pitsmoor in 1897. He had 3 sisters who were all brought up by an Aunt as his mother died giving birth to the last child. Margaret really admired her father who was a really good looking gentleman and highly respected. He took good care of his children following his wife's death and was the manager of the hacksaw department at James Neill. During WW1 he was in the Cold Stream Guards and was posted outside Buckingham Palace. During WW2 he was in the Home Guard as a Crosspool Fire Watcher. Now her father's family history is a bit of a mystery and he would never talk about it. Margaret thinks that his grandmother once worked as a maid in one of the royal households.....and he did have a resemblance of King EdwardVIII! ..... and he was posted outside Buckingham Palace instead of being sent to the front.....!

As a child, Margaret attended High Storrs School where boys and girls were in separate halves of the school and started and finished school 15 minutes apart. After finishing school, Margaret was first a window dresser and then worked

for a chartered accountant in Paradise Square. She got married and was then working at the Coldwell Lane play group before entering into a 3 year teacher training programme in 1973. Just as she was getting bored with her first school, she was invited to join a teacher task force to help sort out problems at targeted schools. She was finally sent to Parson Cross School which was suffering with sick and retiring teachers and finished up as head of department for art and history until her retirement in 1999.

Margaret's current interests are gardening, family history and photography using her traditional SLR. Margaret is a stalwart of the Rivelin Valley Conservation Group Committee and still provides the snacks and refreshments for every committee meeting which is completely taken for granted. She has supported many of the RVCG events and continues as the main editor of the RVCG newsletter publishing articles from our members. Margaret kept meticulous records of the RVCG membership which she finally handed over to Christine and Graham Roe after 25 years. I had great pleasure in presenting Margaret with a silver plated pie server and presentation box made by Carrs of Sheffield for 25 years service along with Roger Kite MBE at the AGM earlier this year. I would like to congratulate Margaret on the 100<sup>th</sup> newsletter and to thank her on behalf of the committee for her long dedication and commitment .... and for providing the tea and biscuits at our meetings!

Graham Appleby