



Newsletter

Rivelin Valley Conservation Group

Winter 2018 no 105

Through The Chair

2017 ended with concerns about the building of a dam across the Rivelin Valley between the children's playground in Rivelin Park and Roscoe Wheel. Changes in National and Local government has reduced the impetus and the finance available has been reduced drastically. The remaining resources available will be used to make improvements at the confluence of the Loxley and Don near Penistone Road. There is also more interest in more long term flood control by tree planting and creation of bogs and natural flood areas which should help slow down the movement of flood water.

The other controversy was around the removal of lime trees on Rivelin Valley Road which appears to have stalled for the moment. I am hoping that the strong response from various pressure groups and the embarrassing publicity will result in a more considerate street tree maintenance programme. There still seems to be a reluctance to find effective ways of repairing footpaths disturbed by tree roots although this is practiced in other areas of Britain and in other countries.

The RVCG task team have been busy installing benches provided by local grants and have already sign-posted each dam thanks to the generosity of its members. We are now campaigning for footpath improvements particularly around Rivelin Park and Roscoe Wheel and other crumbling footpaths. Our membership has remained strong at 244 households and I thank you for your valuable support.

Graham Appleby
RVCG Chairman

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Donations

Many thanks for the following donations amounting to £78 so far this year. Hailey, Hammal, Firth, Alesbrook, Lindsey and Melvin. Your donations will be put to good use and your generosity is amazing and helps in RVCG work.

Some Recent Events

10th October 2017 David Cherry. The Woodhead Diaries

The Woodhead Line was a railway line linking Sheffield, Penistone and Manchester and involved the building of three tunnels in 1845, 1853 and the third in 1953 replacing tunnels one and two with an electrified line but all were closed by 1981. During the building of the tunnels, the mainly Irish navvies were welcomed in Manchester with the song "See the Conquering Hero Comes". Unfortunately, few records exist of the workforce and fatalities. If the men weren't injured or killed by falling rocks they could be taken by the then incurable infections such as cholera, flu or tuberculosis. There was no

compensation given in case of accidents, leaving their families without finance. The men worked ceaselessly with no leisure time to recover and frequently never saw the light of day. They even had to provide their own tools. Their work was conducted by candlelight, another source of danger. Dave Cherry had his fictional book 'The Woodhead Diaries' on sale.

14th November 2017

Martyn Johnson - The Making of the Book "Black Diamonds"

Martyn Johnson gave a humorous and interesting talk about his life as a policeman and then security advisor to Earl Fitzwilliam at his stately home at Wentworth Woodhouse near Rotherham. The house is one that would easily rival tourist spots such as Chatsworth and was the largest family home in Britain with the longest façade in Europe. "Black Diamonds" refers to the coal mined in the area that made the Fitzwilliam family very wealthy. The village of Wentworth once depended on the "Big House" for its existence. It provided staffing and gardeners and in return they were well looked after in a paternalistic way, being provided with life's needs from cradle to grave. A large "Stable Block" away from the house provided all the workings and accommodation for the staff needed to maintain the house, extensive gardens and farms. Earl Fitzwilliam even had his own private railway station within the grounds. Such a large stately home took a lot of finance and repairs so the family eventually retreated to a smaller stately home that they owned further south. Meanwhile the big house was left to deteriorate and pollution was beginning to affect the stonework. Martyn had provided valuable knowledge and assistance to Catherine Bailey who is the author of the book "Black Diamonds, the Rise and Fall of an English Dynasty" which sold out on the

night.

We also heard some of Martyn's own life. As a child in Wentworth he enjoyed the haven provided by the "ings", watery places caused by open cast mining that became well known to bird watchers. He also enjoyed the Wentworth Church Youth Club perhaps because the vicar had five daughters. By the age of 15, his father said, "Tha's got to get a job". So he became an apprentice blacksmith. "You don't need a brain to do that" said Dad. He later applied for a job with the local police force but with no vacancies, he joined the Sheffield City Police. He was asked to take a test - add 297 and 366. He passed. "All you need is gumption" he was told. "Can you fight lad?" he was asked. His answer was "Yes" and so spent his career at Attercliffe police station eventually becoming a detective.

M Sanderson

**Wood Lane Event
27th November 2017**

Once more RVCG took part in this annual event.

The weather remained good. We were spared the strong winds that prevailed a year or two back when we were led to safety just before the marquee collapsed and we were assured that this would never happen again.

There were many families enjoying a day out. RVCG had its usual stall advertising ourselves and hopeful for a few new members.

Joan Buckland and myself manned a stall to make Christmas Cards with children. They can never resist felt pens, coloured pencils, glue and glitter. Most cards were for their Grandma. Graham provided a little liquid sustenance!

Our RVCG collecting box did not gather a large amount of contributions as usual but every little helps. It was surprising how many people had come some

distance and were regulars at this event.

Eventually, Joan and myself escaped to have a look around. A neighbouring stall was a badger protection group and they assured us that there was no TB in local badgers unlike some places in the south of England.

The kitchen was very busy providing refreshments of every kind and it was good to see their delicious Homity Pie on sale. This is a vegetarian pie, mainly cheese, onions, potatoes, parsley and garlic in a pastry case first made in the now defunct Crank's restaurant, Soho. It is very popular not only with vegetarians but meat eaters as well.

M Sanderson

Bird Watching

This is a pleasant occupation from the warmth of your house when you are bunged up with a cold and with no energy.

A lone pied wagtail regularly sits on the garage roof wagging its tail up and down while searching for crumbs. Why is it on its own? My BTO bird book says that they can roost together in their hundreds in winter. Has it lost its friends?

M Sanderson

Wanted

Your wildlife reports are always welcome. Does anyone see rabbits now? Once, the fields down the Crosspool side of the valley were full of rabbits bobbing up and down. They even appeared years ago (dead!) in a local butcher's shop. Is myxomatosis still taking its toll? Hares were once very obvious along the Strines road and it was amusing to watch their antics in spring as they tried to impress the females.

Please remember to send your wildlife reports to Joan Buckland. (see contacts list). Records are important to assess any changes or damage caused by

climate or land use.

M Sanderson

A Discovery

A very rare animal was spotted in North Yorkshire last year – a pine martin, the last report of one was in 1982. They were once a commonly seen carnivore. Come down here to Rivelin. We have a lovely wood and would like to see you.

Return of Golden Eagles?

It is hoped that this wonderful creature may return to the north of England. It is largely extinct in England, sometimes being persecuted. A project has £1.3m from the Heritage Lottery Fund to protect golden eagles in Scotland hoping that they might spread south. Experts at RSPB say that many birds struggle to survive because of poison, nest disturbance and shooting. Only three pairs bred last year and none were on grouse moors.

Seeing a golden eagle is a fabulous though rather fearsome sight. I once saw one on a walking trip in Scotland sitting on a fencing post. Its face turned towards us with a quite disdainful stare. I wouldn't like to be on the wrong end of its beak or claws.

M Sanderson

Pests and Diseases

Some horse chestnut trees were invaded by leaf miners last autumn. Also some of these trees were affected by "bleeding canker" that can kill a tree. These are two new pests to attack our trees. Dutch elm disease also killed off elm trees in the 1970's. It is said that climate change is part of the problem because in warmer weather alien pests aggravate the problem. Most of our woodlands consist of five varieties – oak, ash, beech, sycamore and birch. Conservationists say we should plant a larger range. (Thanks to The Guardian for this information)

HELP

Over the years we have had in this newsletter many of your Rivelin stories. We love to read them no matter how small. Please contact M Sanderson if you have anything to say

See Contacts List

Membership

It's time to renew membership. Please use the enclosed form. We are still only £3.

THE RECORDER – Winter 2017/18

The Recorder

The weather over the holiday period has been more seasonal this year with quite a few frosty and snowy days before and after Christmas. Despite this, 2017 was the warmest year on record without the influence of El Nino. The years 2015 and 2016 were actually warmer but were influenced by El Nino. Experts say it is not getting windier but I have had more plant pots blown over lately, although perhaps I live in a wind tunnel! Some plants have survived the cold weather. I picked my last Peace rose this week and Calendula and Periwinkle are still in flower. The sun is setting about ten minutes a week later and days are getting longer. The snowdrops are in flower and the Red Currant bush buds are growing. It is time to plan the garden. There is not much in the way of insect life yet. You may have seen little swarms of winter midges hovering over the borders, and ladybirds stirring from their hiding places in the house. The slugs and insect larvae in my compost bins are active on warm days and doing a good job on the vegetable waste.

I have had up to nine Blackbirds in the garden but yesterday, 21st January, their routine was disrupted, much to their annoyance. I spotted a Fieldfare eating the windfall apples, just gone noon. It is the first one I have seen this year. It decided my garden was quite a good place to be and stayed there until it got dark, chasing the usual inhabitants away every time they came on the

lawn. The lawn was covered in snow then, but it has all melted and I have not seen the Fieldfare today. Has anyone else seen a Fieldfare, Redwing or Waxwing this year? Just lately about fifteen rooks have been making a lot of noise in Clough Wood, near Stephen Hill. I wonder if they are sussing it out with a view to making a new rookery? That will make a bit of difference to the evensong and dawn chorus! Yesterday was a really good day for birds. I spent a lot of time watching and photographing the Fieldfare. The bird feeders were very busy also and I was delighted to see a male Greenfinch. These birds are still recovering from the fatal parasitic disease trichomonosis and numbers have been greatly reduced. It is imperative to keep bird feeders, tables and water containers clean to prevent the onward transmission of disease. It is a paradox that whilst we are helping the birds to survive over the winter months we could also be the unwitting cause of their death. A study considering the relationship between human activity and bird survival suggests that feeding birds in the spring can have an adverse affect on breeding success. This is because predators such as Grey Squirrels and Sparrow Hawks are attracted to feeding stations and nests are often not too far away and may be raided by the Squirrels. So if you notice Squirrels and Hawks more frequently in the spring it might be a good idea to stop feeding the birds for a while. Another cause of death, which is avoidable, is from

discarded drink cans and bottles. Snails and small mammals are attracted to the sugar and get trapped in the containers. I have picked up cans and bottles with dead creatures inside. I cannot understand why some people (none of our members I am sure) throw their bottles and cans into the countryside. If it was not for voluntary organisations like RVCG we would be knee deep in litter as the councils have not got the funds to deal with the matter.

I heard a talk by Tim Birkhead and was intrigued to learn that male Bullfinches can be trained to whistle tunes, which is amazing as their natural song is not very melodic. They imprint on their trainer and one bird learned three tunes. I have had three male and two female Bullfinches regularly on the feeders. They look so colourful against the snow but unfortunately I did not hear any unusual whistling from them.

Look out for the signs of spring. Birds will be migrating from and to our islands. Bees, butterflies and frogs will be stirring and plants growing. Please let me know the first time you see something. It is always interesting to compare dates with previous years.

Thank you to the following for their records

:-

David Lloyd S10 – 10/2017 – Comma Butterfly on window; 2 Buzzards over Lodge Lane – 11/2017.

Vivien Falshaw S10 – 21.10.17 – Great Spotted Woodpecker seen for first time in garden. 17.12.17 for a whole week – 1 Redwing eating cotoneaster berries, and regular

visits by Coal tits.

Sue Shaw S6 – 29.10.17 – Rivelin Corn Mill – 12 Long-tailed Tits, Nuthatch. 15.11.17 – Roscoe – Kingfisher; 17.11.17 – Walkley garden 2 Wren, 4 Blue Tits, 4 Blackbirds, Sparrows, Pigeons, Magpies.

Mary Musselwhite S6 – 19.10.17 and 16.11.17 – Kingfisher at Roscoe chair sculpture and bridge near children's playground.

Pauline Higbid S10 – Garden in December – regularly sees Blue, Great and Long-tailed Tits, Nuthatch, Dunnocks, Robins and Blackbirds. 18.12.17 – Mistle Thrush – 1st time this year. Also saw a Kingfisher at Wolf wheel on 4.1.18.

Roger Kite S10 – 17.1.18 - In garden - Female Sparrow Hawk on branch two foot away from a Wood Pigeon which was very puffed up, maybe because of the cold or to make it look bigger. They sat looking at each other for five minutes, then the hawk flew away to look for smaller prey.

21.1.18- S10 – in my garden -7 Blackbirds, 10 Sparrows, 2 Blue Tits, female Chaffinch, male Greenfinch, Robin, 1 pair Bullfinch, 1 Fieldfare, 1 Great Tit, 2 Magpies, 1 Jackdaw, 2 Wood pigeons, Wren, 8 Long-tailed Tits. (pity it was not the Big Garden Birdwatch weekend). I also have had Dunnock, Coal Tit, Goldfinch, Rooks and Goldcrest recently. Down the valley on my Boxing Day walk I, at long last, saw a Kingfisher flying up the river near Third Coppice, and on the 10.1.18 saw a Kingfisher actually fishing on Wolf Wheel.

Joan Buckland
22.1.18

Rivelin Water Treatment Works

As you may be aware construction work on the £25 M scheme at Rivelin is nearing completion. The new buildings house the replacement water treatment process for the existing Sirofloc Plant. The RVCG have just been advised by Yorkshire Water that this new treatment process entered supply on 27th December 2017 and the old Sirofloc plant shut down. This meets the requirements of the Drinking Water Inspectorate of having the new process operational by the end of 2017. No doubt a number of staff had a working Christmas to achieve the target date!

The old Sirofloc Process and its issues together with the new replacement clarifiers have been described in detail in earlier newsletters.

During the later stages of commissioning the new clarifiers both processes were operated in parallel until sufficient new units were available to meet the treated water demand on the works.

We understand that at the time of writing 4 of the 7 new clarifiers and all the new rapid gravity filters are operating into supply.

The remaining units will be brought into supply during January and February 2018.

The concrete structures will be buried as part of the landscaping which will take place through 2018 but exact timing will be weather dependant,

however the target date for scheme completion is August 2018.

David Lyon

Proposed Finished Landscape



Nick Clegg cutting the first sod November 2015



Internal View of the new plant showing one of the new clarifiers

