



# Newsletter

Rivelin Valley Conservation Group

Spring 2019 no 110

## Through The Chair

Welcome to the Spring newsletter. There has been a lot of news recently about climate change and about saving the planet. I'd like to think that the RVCG are doing just a little towards making our little corner of Britain a bit more nature friendly and in a way for its visitors to enjoy. Plus the City Council is cash strapped and so they are keen for volunteer groups to assist them in making our parks better places to ramble through and to sit and contemplate.

The RVCG held its 28<sup>th</sup> AGM in April which is always a good time to look at what we have achieved and what we want to do in future. The event was particularly interesting since Mike Dyson introduced the RVCG to William Lowe and gave us a short but pertinent talk on this little known artist who has captured a few of the Rivelin mills during the C19<sup>th</sup> through his sketches and paintings. There is more detail about this within this newsletter and please contact me if you are interested in any of the vacancies advertised.

So looking ahead, the Task Team will continue to improve the nature trail with its SLLP grant. We have our RVCG Garden Party on the 28<sup>th</sup> July and would like someone with barbeque culinary skills to help us out on that day. We are also planning a Rivelin Heritage Open Day on 22<sup>nd</sup> Sep which will include wildlife and historical displays and walks to the famous Mousehole Forge. This could attract a lot of people from across the city and I would like plenty of volunteers to help us manage the event safely. Please contact me if you are interested in helping.

Graham Appleby  
RVCG Chairman

## Contacts

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## War Memorial tree

A tree has been planted in the grassy bank just above the river near the café to commemorate the end of the First World War 100 years ago. There is a granite stone memorial beneath the tree with the inscription "**Lest We Forget.** All the brave men and women of Sheffield who gave their lives and those who hereafter continue to give, in the pursuit of freedom and peace. WW1 Centenary 2018." Overall Sheffield City Council have planted 100 trees at 36 parks across the city to commemorate the end of WW1.

Sue Shaw

## Footpath/dam wall repairs.

In February 2019 work was completed on repairs to the footpath and dam wall near the car park at Havelock Dam. Repair work has also been carried out at Hind Wheel mill dam (the 'Round Dam'), which involved closing the footpath around the dam for a while. As part of this, the steps on the upstream side of the dam were repaired and a metal handrail installed. The RVCG has complained to the Council about the handrail and suggested that a wooden one would be more in keeping with the setting. Recent footpath work at Roscoe has been carried out by the RVCG Task Team.

## Protecting Sheffield from Flooding update

The Council is currently working on plans to improve flood defences for homes and businesses along the lower Loxley river, from Malin Bridge to where the Loxley joins the Don (behind car showrooms at Owlerton). This project is part of the programme for the Upper Don and Sheaf announced in 2016 (which also included the two proposed Rivelin flood storage areas). It will mostly involve building conventional flood defences (e.g. walls) but the feasibility of providing public access beside the river is also being investigated as part of the scheme. It is hoped that the ground works will start later this year. Responsibility and a funding source for channel maintenance of the Sheffield rivers (including at Malin Bridge) is still under discussion with the Environment Agency and the Chamber of Commerce.

The Council has convened a working group on Natural Flood Management measures to look at how these could be used in the Upper Don catchment to contribute to flood prevention. These techniques, including things like tree planting, 'leaky dams' and better land management, aim to hold more water back in order to 'slow the flow' of water into the main rivers, thereby helping to reduce flooding and to improve water quality by reducing the amount of soil erosion. Natural Flood Management measures are also included in projects within the Sheffield Lakeland Landscape Partnership programme. Discussions are ongoing between the Council and Yorkshire Water regarding the use of reservoirs in the Don catchment (including Loxley and Rivelin) for storage of flood water as part of flood risk management.

SCC is also running a programme of culvert repairs that will address smaller culverts in poor repair in locations where de-culverting is not possible – due to start in Spring 2019.

Sue Shaw

## Birdwatchers at Wyming Brook confronted by masked men.

In mid-February, two birdwatchers were confronted by masked men at Wyming Brook nature reserve. They were returning from one

of their regular walks through the reserve when they were met by men in balaclavas and camouflage gear who were blocking the car park exit and preventing them from leaving. They were subsequently questioned and searched by the police and told they were suspected of snare tampering (which is illegal, as is snare setting). In the end there was no evidence and as a result of how the incident was handled the birdwatchers complained to the police and received an apology. For the full story and advice on what to do if you come across an illegal snare, see:

<https://www.wildsheffield.com/birdwatchers-confronted-by-masked-men/>

Why not persuade someone else to join our group. Our subs have remained the same since we first started.

## New edition of Walking the Rivelin.

Having sold nearly all of the 2000 copies of the 5<sup>th</sup> Edition that have so far been printed, we are working on a new, improved edition, which we hope will be published soon.

A reviewer on Amazon recently gave the current edition a glowing review: *"I read the book and absorbed the easy to read text accompanied by plans, photos and visualizations of artists past and present. I almost knew what to expect before arriving, the book then became a prompt and/or back up to reinforce or clarify a point of interest. Well worth the money, easy to read, now lent to my friend to expand the knowledge pool".*

Sue Shaw

## Picking Bilberries

Does anyone still take part in this occupation? As a child, the whole family would descend onto Den Bank Edge when the weather was good.

My sister, aunt and self would be equipped with a jam jar that had a string tied around the top to hold it with and would start picking. My father would sit and enjoy the view while smoking his pipe. He said it kept the midges away. One mishap was if we dropped the jar, it was difficult to pick up tiny bilberries from amongst the heather and bracken so as young as I was, I suggested that we should

only put a small layer in the bottom and keep taking it for safe keeping to Grandma who had a big pot. Nothing could be better than the pies and jam that Grandma produced, so much better than shop bought blueberries. Some years ago when in Iceland we noticed people on the far hillside busy picking bilberries. We were told that one day was chosen to pick them so that everyone got a fair share. You went home with blue stained fingers

Picking blackberries is a far more difficult job with their nasty back pointing thorns that can tear your skin and catch in your clothes. Even so, they taste much better than commercial varieties.

M Sanderson

### **A Big Event**

It was a special day when the whole of Sheffield was enthralled with the commemoration of the bomber crew who sacrificed their lives when they came down in Endcliffe Park 75 years ago, and how one man, Terry Faulds, has looked after their memorial in Endcliffe Park, keeping the memory alive. Whether you watched at the event on television or were actually there, it was a riveting occasion. Those who live in the Rivelin and Loxely area also had the pleasure of seeing the planes pass overhead as they completed their fly past.

M Sanderson

### **The Enemy?**

We all are familiar with the Grey Squirrel that eats food we have put out for the birds and are thought to be the cause of our declining red squirrels. Now chef, Ivan Tindall Davies serves squirrel pie. in his restaurant. There are plenty of them around and he says that people are already used to eating wild creatures such as grouse and partridge. The greys are bigger than red squirrels and less likely to get infections than the reds. They arrived from North America in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the University of Edinburgh says that greys are more successful at solving difficult problems than the reds and have better disease resistance. How nice it would be to see the red squirrel romping around Rivelin.

One saviour for our native red squirrel is the pine martin. Once common they are now found only in Scotland. Emma Sheery of Aberdeen University says that this could work but it would take time and the present controls must take place. Grey squirrels were introduced as a novelty. But they carry a pox disease that is deadly to the reds.

Pine martins have now been spotted over the border into Keilder Forest England so perhaps in time we will see the reds return.

Some Scottish pine martins have been moved to Wales but reintroduction would be costly.

Another solution would be an oral contraceptive but this would also be costly.

The Forestry Commission says that grey squirrels cost millions of pounds in damage to our native trees...

M Sanderson

### **A Plant You Might Not Want**

At the bottom of my garden is horsetail – not the equine variety but the kind you might not want. Equisetum is its other name. It has long brown underground rhizomes. I have tried for 20 years to get rid of it but it seems oblivious to weed killers or boiling water and made worse by growing under footpaths. I now look at it differently as it is a very ancient plant

### **Some recent Events**

#### **12<sup>th</sup> February 2019**

#### **Andrew Firth – Signs of the Times.**

This was a fast moving, informative talk that made me wish I could have recorded it. He also had us having a good laugh.

For example – Derby spelled Darby. Darwin Road in Crosspool, Curbar spelled Cirby and noted on a Derbyshire Road – “Beware, Cat’s Eyes removed”..

#### **12 March 2019**

#### **Penny Rae – Wincobank Hill Iron Age to Present**

Here we are, close to Meadowhall and it is hard to think that this area and adjacent Wincobank was once a rural area and still to this day, contains ancient woodland. Mary Ann Lawson was responsible for building a chapel that is still there and very carefully looked after.

The Roman Ridge remains and also an Iron Age Hill Fort. The area contains old cottages

and 1960's council houses have crept up the hillside. The Northern General Hospital is close by and once was the site of the dreaded workhouse. People have inhabited this area for centuries as flint implements have been found, brought from the east coast over 2,000 years ago. They would have been used as sharp tools. Later, many trees were removed by the council and used for beams also illegally for firewood. Grimesthorpe colliery once on this site had several deaths. And danger came from firedamp. The area also hosted the Tour de France cycle race that went down Jenkin Road. Presently there is a social problem caused by rubbish being dropped and motor bikes having races.

M Sanderson

### **Blast from the Past**

### **Blast from the past From the Autumn 2006 newsletter**

Nobby is a red Limousin bull who lives at Coppice House Farm. His name begins with N because that is the year letter for when he was born- 1997. The Revitt's granddaughter aged 2 ½ picked him out at Chesterfield.

Nobby is a happy bull and weighs nearly a ton. Visitors to the farm shop might have seen him, peacefully observing the goings on of a busy farm and giving out an occasional bellow just to prove that he's a bull. Nobby did a good job fathering the farm's calves with Friesian cows and revelling in the company of his kind. One day when he should have been happily frolicking with heifers in the field he was found to be missing. The Revitts searched all over fearing that he might have got onto the road. Eventually he was found with the milk cows and calves at the far end of the farm. Nobby had jumped over three walls to reach them. After this escapade he didn't do his duty. Few new calves arrived on the farm. He went off the boil. Pam thinks that his 'trinklements' must have got damaged when he did his Olympic hurdling.

By now, you must have realised that Nobby is doomed or does anyone want a pet bull? It may well be that by the time you read this he might have made a final visit to Bakewell Market. He might even now be grazing in some evergreen field under a heavenly blue sky watching fluffy white clouds float by. Bet he's glad to be out of the rat race where he has to live up to worldly expectations. Can you hear his contented mooing?

M Sanderson

**Well done to RVCG members. So far this year your donations have raised £1108.02 This will be put to good use.**

**Thank you to Valleyside Garden Centre for their continued support.**



# The RVCG Task Team

Spring 2019

Traditionally the first task day of the New Year is a gentle affair to blow away the Xmas cobwebs and so I arranged for the task team to litter pick from the S Bend down to Malin Bridge where a considerable amount of litter had accumulated over Xmas. However, just two days before, the Councils contractor, Amey, beat us to it! In a desperate attempt to find alternative work for us, I went for a walk up the Valley from the S bend and as I approached Wolf Wheel Dam there was an enormous amount of litter which had been dumped down the valley side from the Wolf car park.



So that became our task. Armed with ropes, grappling hook and large builder's bag, we set about dragging the litter up the valley side to store in the carpark ready for collection. However, it quickly became obvious that this was no ordinary litter but the contents of a cannabis farm, including cannabis plant material which I then reported to the police.



The litter was quickly removed by the Council the very next day and I doubt if there was any evidence of the offenders amongst it. The Council suggested that we installed a wooden fence in the carpark to prevent it happening again and so this became our task day at the end of January.



## **The Heritage Lottery fund and the Sheffield Lakeland Landscape Partnership**

As mentioned in the previous newsletter, SLLP was successful in obtaining a £3.4m grant from HLG to help improve the wildlife habitats, waterways and public access to an area known as Sheffield Lakeland. The Rivelin Valley was just within the catchment at the southern border and the RVCG put in a successful bid for a £20k grant.



The **Feb task day** became the start of our SLLP work and following talks with the Council footpath officers, we agreed to make a start on the footpath around Roscoe Wheel which became extremely muddy in wet weather.



A hard-working team of 10 volunteers, installed 8 tons of footpath material adjacent to Roscoe Dam. Right next to the Grade II listed Roscoe Bridge is a mound of soil and glass from previous greenhouse clearances. The glass regularly washes down onto the adjacent path causing an obvious danger to passing families and their dogs. Therefore, we built a small retaining wall around the base of the mound in the hope of retaining the glass



The **March task day** was a continuation of the above with plans to install much needed footpath material over Roscoe Bridge. However, the footpath material was half a mile away in the Rivelin allotments car park and it became a time-consuming job trying to shift 8 tons of material using a car and small trailer. In the event, only half the bridge was covered, and we intend returning as soon as possible to finish the job.



Another task on the day was to improve the path to the nearby Chair Sculpture which is accessed via stepping-stones. The river wall was restored, and footpath material installed to cover the rocky uneven ground as a temporary measure until the task team returns to install some steps.



Graham Appleby 5/4/19



## The RVCG 28<sup>th</sup> AGM

The RVCG celebrated its 28<sup>th</sup> AGM at Stephen Hill Church on 16<sup>th</sup> April followed by a pie and pea supper. The event was very well attended and members were also the first to see the recently purchased collection of William Lowe sketches with an interesting overview and presentation by Mike Dyson.



RVCG Committee 2018/19

The RVCG remains financially sound thanks to the generous donations from its members and other societies, a number of successful grant applications and the careful financial management by the RVCG committee; all closely monitored by the treasurer, David Lyons. The recent Heritage Lottery Grant of £20k for the Sheffield Lakeland Landscape Project will allow the RVCG task team to carry out some really effective and necessary work in the Rivelin Valley without pulling too much on the RVCG's own funds which will be used to support other projects not covered under SLLP.

### The RVCG needs a new Treasurer!

**David Lyon** (top second from right in the picture) has decided to step down as treasurer after many years of dedication to the RVCG and would like someone to take over as soon as possible. If you or someone you know may be interested, then please contact Graham Appleby 07850712988

**Derek Hastings** is the current RVCG Planning Advisor and has been keeping an eye on local planning applications for the past 25 years. Derek has given excellent service to the RVCG and its community but feels that now is the time to stand down. Unfortunately, Derek was unable to attend the AGM and so I caught up with him at the Three Merry Lads to present him with his 25 year award of a Sheffield made silver pie server in a beautiful wooden presentation box and a note of congratulations.



Derek Hastings holding his 25 year award for his contribution to the RVCG

### The RVCG needs a new Planning Officer!

If anyone would like to assist Derek and learn the skills of the planning role then please contact Graham Appleby 07850712988. Previous planning experience is preferred but not essential.

The RVCG committee had to say thank you and goodbye to **Helen Beardmore** (top right in the picture) who was unable to give the necessary time to the RVCG committee due to her current employment. Helen is a very talented individual who made a significant contribution to the RVCG and will be missed.

**Keith Kendall** has decided to step down as Task Team Leader but will remain on the committee without portfolio. Keith retires from his employment this year after 50 years with the same company. The task team will now be managed by a small leadership team which includes Keith.

We also gave a special thank you to **Irene Harrison** for organising last year's very entertaining RVCG speaker programme and also to **Mavis Roadhouse** and **Sally Turnbull** for maintaining their very important role of providing refreshments.



Irene Harrison, the RVCG speaker organiser, receiving her thank you from the chairman

## William Lowe (1803-1878)

William Lowe was a Sheffield engraver by trade and an artist in his spare time. Not a lot is known about him although his sketches and paintings have been used in several historical publications. As very few cameras were available during the C19<sup>th</sup>, his sketches and paintings are some of the few pictures we have of our local mills and valleys of that period. Lowe produced over 300 sketches; the detail of which is described in a 1958 paper written by the late G.R.Adams for the Hunter Archaeological Society Transactions (volume 8), although this contained none of his drawings. His original sketchbook passed through several private hands intact, but in more recent times, the 310 sketches have been removed and sold

individually on the internet and sadly now dispersed worldwide.



Lowe pen and ink sketch of Rivelin Valley with Roscoe Wheel in the lower right-hand side. One of fifteen original pen and ink sketches now in the RVCG's own Lowe collection.

In our previous newsletter there was an article about the recent passing of Dennis J Smith who was a good friend of local historian, Mike Dyson. Dennis had owned a few of Lowes original sketches but following his house clearance, the whereabouts of these sketches are unknown. However, much to the relief of Mike Dyson, many of Dennis's other collections such as his valuable penknives and cutlery for example, have been donated to the Ken Hawley collection Trust at Kelham Island and hopefully Mike Dyson will be assisting them with the sorting and identification.



A copy of a William Lowe painting of a horseman at Stanage Pole measuring 6"x 4" but the original now missing since the house clearance of Dennis J Smith.

Fortunately, Mike Dyson had taken a digital copy of some of the Lowe pictures owned by Dennis and had also managed to obtain a few other digital copies owned by other



locals and from internet sites selling Lowes sketches. By sheer co-incidence, Mike came across the remaining 15 sketches from the original collection, mainly of Rivelin Valley mills, on sale with Mr James Clarke who owns an antique shop in Pickering and who had purchased 41 sketches back in 2012.

Mike was keen for the fifteen Lowe originals to be passed into safe hands for posterity but his attempts to gain interest from the Sheffield City Council and other organisations was disappointing. However, by sheer co-incidence, the RVCG had just received a £500 donation from the Steel City Striders following their Percy Pud 10k run the previous autumn and so the RVCG committee agreed to the purchase of the fifteen originals for £600. Mike also provided around 30 framed copies of Lowe sketches and paintings from various sources for which the RVCG paid a further £200 mainly to cover the cost of the frames. Mike Dyson's own father was a member of the Rivelin Mill Artist's Colony in the 1920's and Mike has also donated several framed pictures from this period.

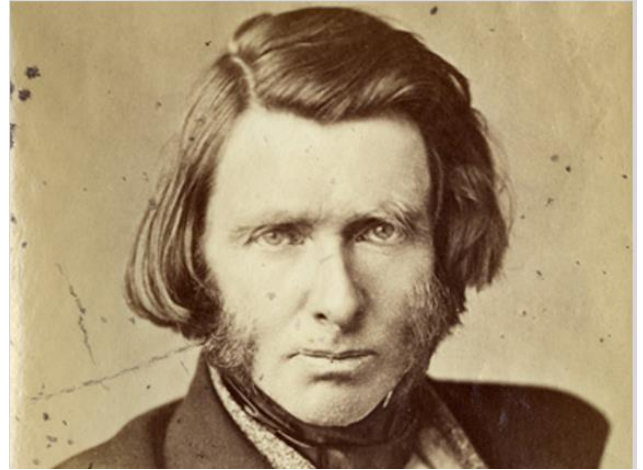


Mike Dyson at the RVCG AGM preparing to give a talk about his William Lowe collection

*This article has been written with kind permission of Mike Dyson who is the author of 'The Wonderful World of William Lowe 1803–1878 Sheffield Artist and Engraver' which should be published very soon. The RVCG would like to thank Mike for his immense contribution to the William Lowe story and for the RVCG collection.*

This year, we celebrate the bicentenary of the birth of two men who made a positive impact in Sheffield:

## John Ruskin (1819 – 1900)



John Ruskin was born on 8 February 1819 in Brunswick Square, London, one of the most important writers and thinkers of the 19th century. His father, John James Ruskin was a sherry and wine importer and an astute business- man who introduced John to the likes of Byron, Shakespeare and especially Walter Scott. His mother, Margaret, encouraged his spiritual side and had him read and memorize from the Holy Bible. He travelled with his father to many great estates here and abroad where he absorbed the romance, architecture and the many great paintings. He became interested in poetry and scientific study and eventually entered Oxford University in 1836 as a 'Gentleman Commoner', enjoying equal status with his aristocratic peers. In 1839 he won the prestigious Newdigate Prize for poetry and was introduced to William Wordsworth at the same ceremony. Ruskin collected water colours and was a huge fan of the artist, Turner, cataloguing over 20,000 sketches that Turner had given to the nation. He became a revered art critic writing four volumes on 'Modern Painters' inspired by his travels through Europe and especially Italy.

In 1848 Ruskin married Effy Gray, the daughter of family friends. Effy was a socialiser and John was a bit of a recluse engaged in his studies of art and architecture. The marriage was annulled after 6 years apparently having never been

'consummated', the circumstances of which remain a lively item of debate but quietly swept under the carpet by John Ruskin.

John Ruskin was a renowned thinker, writer, artist and social reformer. He founded the Guild of St George in 1871 to help make the world a better place to live in. In 1875, Ruskin visited his friend and former pupil Henry Swan in Walkley. Excited by the landscape and strong artisan tradition he found, Ruskin opened a museum to promote the liberal education of Sheffield's working men. Ruskin chose Walkley to bring Sheffielders up and out of the city to a place of clean air and broad horizons with views over Rivelin 'in their wild uncultivated beauty suggestive of the Alps'. St Georges museum, Bole Hill Road was closed in 1890, following Swan's death, and the Ruskin collection was moved to larger premises in Meersbrook. The collection is now housed in the Millennium Galleries.

*Information obtained from Wikipedia and 'Ruskin in Sheffield'.* For the numerous events planned throughout this year for the bicentennial celebrations see: [www.ruskininsheffield.com](http://www.ruskininsheffield.com) and [www.ruskininwalkley.org](http://www.ruskininwalkley.org)

## Mark Firth (1819 – 1880)



Mark Firth as 'The Master Cutler' at the Cutlers Hall Sheffield

**Mark Firth** (25 April 1819 – 28 November 1880) was an English industrialist and philanthropist. Firth was born in Sheffield, the son of Thomas Firth (1789–1850), of Pontefract, York, and Mary Loxley. He had 5 children with his first wife Sarah Bingham Taylor and a further 7 children with his second wife Caroline Gedling Bradley (1833–1894)

He joined the crucible steel works of Sanderson Brothers where his father worked as head smelter, but left in 1842 to set up his own business with his brother, Thomas Jr. Their father joined them shortly afterwards, and in 1852 Thomas Firth & Sons had expanded into larger premises at the Norfolk Works in Savile Street, which had the largest rolling mill in Sheffield.

The Firth's business expanded into the armaments market, installing two large steam hammers in 1863. In 1871, the company cast the thirty-five ton "Woolwich Infant" gun. In 1875 they produced an eighty-ton gun.

Firth was elected to the office of Master Cutler in 1867, which he held for the following two years. He was elected Mayor of Sheffield in 1874. In 1875, he presented a thirty-six acre estate to the town of Sheffield as Firth Park. He also built a mansion for himself on the outskirts of Sheffield at Oakbrook, Ranmoor, now part of Notre Dame High School. In 1879, he opened Firth College to teach arts and science subjects, which later became part of the University of Sheffield. Firth lends his name to the Firth Wing of the Northern General Hospital, and Firth Court of the University.

He was a Methodist and a Liberal. On 16 November 1880 Firth was at his Norfolk Works when he suffered a stroke, and died 12 days later. He is buried in Sheffield General Cemetery on Cemetery Road, where his monument is Grade II listed.

*The above information can be found on Wikipedia*

Graham Appleby



# THE RECORDER – Spring 2019

## The Recorder

March has lived up to the saying and came 'in like a lion and went out like a lamb'. We have certainly had a lot of wind and rain and been battered by Storms Freya and Gareth. So far we have only had a couple of days with snow at the end of January, which brought the Fieldfares back to my garden to eat the apples. February arrived and weird weather, not 'black or white' but hot and sunny. Most days the temperature reached double figures and on the 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> all previous records were broken with some places reaching 20 or 21 degrees. Last year at that time we had quite a lot of snow, but this year, the poor creatures thought summer had arrived. Butterflies, bees and ladybirds were flying and frogs were very active. Several people have reported frogs and spawn even earlier than usual. The insects would have been able to feed as there are plenty of flowers and blossom out. I even saw our Noctule bat on two evenings. I hope it has gone back to sleep as I have not seen many moths yet.

We still have mice in the garage as the apples are getting nibbled again. We caught a third one, which has joined the others up the garden, but they are getting wise and avoiding the trap. I expect you all know what mice droppings look like (bats are very similar), but if you get any droppings in the garden that you are unsure about perhaps you could put them up in a jar and bring them to one of the meetings, and I will try to identify them. You may have something visiting the garden that you were unaware of. Margaret Sanderson had some droppings under her hedge. They were greyish/white with bits in and about 8cm long. The bits turned out to be the quills of a bird which the fox had eaten. Droppings can give a lot of information about what mammals and birds are eating. They vary in colour according to the diet and this is fascinating. What you find are the indigestible parts of plants and animals such as hair, feathers, teeth, bone, seeds and insect remains. My past experience digging on archaeological sites and sieving for fossil insect remains has proved useful.

Unfortunately, it has not been a Waxwing year in our area but to make up for it there has been an influx of Bramblings, Fieldfares, and Redwings. Bramblings often travel with flocks of Chaffinches and, from a distance, you may not have noticed them as they are similar until you get a closer view. In winter they have a dark brownish head, orange-buff breast and a white rump. They are often found under Beech trees, where they feed on the mast, but this year they have shown up in gardens. They breed in northern Scandinavia, where it is still quite cold, so there is still a chance to see them here. Despite the wind, when it shines, the sun has more strength in it and the signs of Spring are everywhere. Let us hope we do not have hard frosts to damage the plants, and everything settles down to its normal pattern. I will have to rear some frogspawn just in case. Please grow as many plants and flowers as you can to help the natural world survive. A healthy garden is one where the balance of nature is working. Happy gardening and please let me know what you see.

Thank you to the following for their records:-

Bob and Margaret Townrow S10 -2.1.19 – Brambling; 13.2.19 – Sparrowhawk in tree in garden.  
Neil Porter S6 – 16.12.19 – 3 Goosanders on Wolf Wheel; Great Spotted Woodpecker daily in garden; Wrens roosting in Tit nestbox; Little Owl round Coppice Farm; 28.1.19 – 7 Mandarin ducks on Frank Wheel.  
Vivian Falshaw S10 – 8.1.19 – Bramblings; 14-16.1.19 – Thrush; 7.3.19 – 5pm Sparrowhawk on lawn with half eaten prey which it dragged into flowerbed then flew off. Prey probably a Collared Dove as lots of pale feathers in heaps. No sign of prey next a.m.  
11.1.19 – Large skein of geese flying towards Redmires. This is the only report I have had of geese this winter.  
Gillian Drinkwater S10 – 20.1.19 – heard woodpecker drumming 9.30am bottom of Hagg Lane; 10.2.19 – Song Thrush singing its heart out in a tree near Hagg Lane at 9a.m.  
Pauline Higbid S10 – 22/23/24.1.19 – Thrush; and the usual Chaffinch, Goldfinch, Blue Tits, Robin, and Blackbird in the garden; 25.1.19 – Marsh/Willow Tits in the garden; Bramblings on Manchester Road.

Roger Kite S10 – 1.2.19 saw 55 birds (17 species) in one hour in his garden after snow flurries amongst which were 6 Fieldfare, 2 Redwing, 3 Brambling, 6 Starling, 8 Sparrows, 2 Coal Tit, 1 male Bullfinch, 1 male Greenfinch and 1 Wren. Typical – where were they for the Big Garden Bird Watch? 6.2.19 – 6 Sparrows, 3 Blackbirds, and 1 Starling all bathing in pond at the same time; 1 pair Robins. 12.2.19 – 2 Roe Deer walking up into Rivelin Roughs just before dusk. 17.2.19 – first frog activity in pond in garden, first frogspawn 23.2.19 and about 18 frogs on 25<sup>th</sup>; 24.2.19 – Blue Tit exploring nest box; 25/26.2.19 – Starlings taking nesting material into nest box; 25.2.19 – 1 Comma butterfly near Roscoe Bridge; 26.2.19 – Red Admiral on Delph House Road.

Sue Shaw S6 – 6.2.19 seen on nature trail – 2 Herons flying over Packhorse Bridge, Wolf Wheel – Heron in dam, Grey Wagtail above weir, and 6 Mallard on 3<sup>rd</sup> Coppice dam.

Tony Bilsborough 14.2.19 – In Rivelin Valley – has seen Dippers, Heron, Grey Wagtails and Kingfishers, two Roe Deer and two Weasels.

Janet Ann Lee S10 – Jan/Feb – regularly feeds birds and has been rewarded with large numbers of Long-tailed Tits, Blue Tits, Sparrows, Black Birds, Rooks, Jackdaws, and Magpies, and twice lately had ducks waddling round the decking.

Mr/Mrs Moss S10 – also have good numbers of birds visiting the garden. Permanent flock of Goldfinch and small flock of Bramblings throughout Jan. and early Feb. Regular birds include Chaffinches, Bluetits, Great Tits, Coal Tits, Jackdaws, Collared Doves, Sparrows, Starlings, Blackbirds, Magpies, and Wood Pigeons.

Susan Thackeray S25 – In the garden – Bee 15.1.19, 16/17.2.19 – Sparrowhawk – 16.2.19; Blue Tits, Great Tits, Long-tailed Tits and Robin in January and February; and at least 15 Blackbirds in January and February (some of these will be from Scandinavia). Susan is still hoping to see a hedgehog back in the garden. Diana Rybinsky S10 – 2 Willow Tits by stream and at bird feeder. First time two seen together. First frog seen on 21<sup>st</sup> February.

Diana has been keeping records for 20 years and this is the earliest date recorded, the previous first sighting was the 1<sup>st</sup> March in 2012. Noting the date of recurring events in nature over a long period in time gives an insight into the changes in the climate.

Helen Eyre 25.2.19 – Saw a Tortoiseshell Butterfly downstream from Roscoe Bridge and watched a Great Spotted Woodpecker looking for grubs on the trunk of a tree.

Anthony and Sally Williams S6 – had a very interesting and quite rare fungus in their garden which they spotted in January. This was an Earthstar, *Geastrum floriforme*, which, as its common name suggests, is shaped like a star. They are more usually found in coniferous woodland and there is a *Cupressus marcoparpa* growing in their garden. So if you have conifers

in your garden, you might be lucky and spot one.

Colin Best S6 – 3.1.19 – Barn Owl sighted in fields below A57.

Philip Walshaw S10 – Pair of Bramblings in garden in February and have a Blackcap visiting regularly. Also saw a Brimstone Butterfly in the Rivelin during the warm weather in February. (note:- Brimstones are one of the Spring flying butterflies but this year they are earlier than usual. Other butterflies have also been spotted and they are the ones that have also hibernated over the winter. The Brimstone Moth, from a distance, is similar to the butterfly in colour, but it has chestnut markings on the top of the forewings and is about half the size. This usually flies from April and can often be seen just before dusk).

Mrs Gerry Bennet S10 – Gerry has a great variety of birds in the garden but has never had a pair of Bramblings until now and sent me a lovely picture of them on the bird feeder.

Peter Wright S6 – 15.3.19 – lucky to see a female Sparrowhawk swooping through the garden with a Blackbird in its grasp. (Not so lucky for the Blackbird though! I have often seen a Sparrowhawk but never flying with its prey). Peter used to live at Lodge Moor where he had 17 species of birds in the garden. He now lives at Stannington not far from Loxley Wood and he says he does not get as many species now. Possible reason is that there are not many trees in the neighbouring gardens so he has planted a Silver Birch to tempt the birds to stay a while. It will be interesting to see if this works. It is also a good idea to plant a bush with dense cover near to the feeders so the little birds can dive into it to escape predators.

Joan Buckland S10 – Highlights from my garden this winter:- Male Blackbird with silver ring on right leg appeared on the 15.1.19 and was around until the 9.2.19. I wonder if it was the same one I had last year. Pair of Siskin, pair of Bullfinch, pair of Robins (they were not aggressive so must have been friends), 1 male Blackcap, 1 male Greenfinch, 6 Bramblings on 20.1.19 and the latest 1 male on 1.4.19, 6 Fieldfares eating apples on 31.1.19, 1 Goldcrest on 2.2.19, 3 Buzzards flying up the valley on 10.1.19. Female Sparrow Hawk 8.2.19, Honey Bees appeared on 14.2.19, 21.2.19 much insect activity including bumble bees and 7 spot ladybirds and Noctule bat in the evening. My little pond is now overflowing with frogspawn. I have put a bit of spawn in a tank to make sure some survives.

Joan Buckland  
1.4.19