

Summer 2021 no 119

Through The Chair

Welcome to the RVCG Summer newsletter. Apologies for the delay in this edition but I had been struck down with Covid, followed by a holiday, followed by Rivelin Heritage Open Day (HOD). Also, the RVCG printer has had to be replaced. Thank you to RVCG member Mike Ibbotson of S. Clough Ibbotson and Co. Ltd of Campo Lane, Sheffield, for sourcing and installing a new printer for us. The newsletter is highly prized by its members and committee and whilst many of its members receive an eNewsletter by email, around a quarter of the membership still prefer a paper copy. It is also a good advert for the RVCG to hand out at its events. Details of the Rivelin HOD will be in the Autumn newsletter.

After another turbulent year of Covid, the RVCG programme has again been disrupted and we are in constant discussion regarding our task days and open meetings. Task Days will begin again on Sunday 31st Oct tackling areas of Rivelin in need of some attention. We have also hosted task days for some local organisations wanting a volunteer workday for their employees. We have invited guest speakers for our Oct and Nov meetings to be held over Zoom; the details of which you will find enclosed. The future of our face-to-face open meetings is under discussion as we slowly emerge from the pandemic.

The RVCG is in need of help, particularly with its administration if it is to continue with its current programme of events. If you are interested in supporting us, then please contact me to discuss.

Graham Appleby
RVCG Chairman

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**The RVCG would like to thank
Valleyside Garden Centre for their
continued support**

Sue Shaw Report

Friends of Watersmeet Island

Watersmeet Island is the small area reclaimed by nature at the point between the two bridges at Malin Bridge, where the River Rivelin meets the Loxley. The island is created by both rivers and a short, culverted channel which links the two. Now the site is a thick area of woodland providing home to nature.

A new Facebook group 'Friends of Watersmeet Island' has recently been formed. The group holds working sessions and last year worked with the Environment Agency, Green City Heritage, and the Street Heritage Research Group, to install a heritage information and interpretation board at the site (on Stannington Road). They hope to improve community access from the Rivelin Valley Road side of the site, put in seating with a view across both rivers and perhaps install stepping stones across the bottom of the Rivelin there too (there was a crossing there before RVR was constructed).

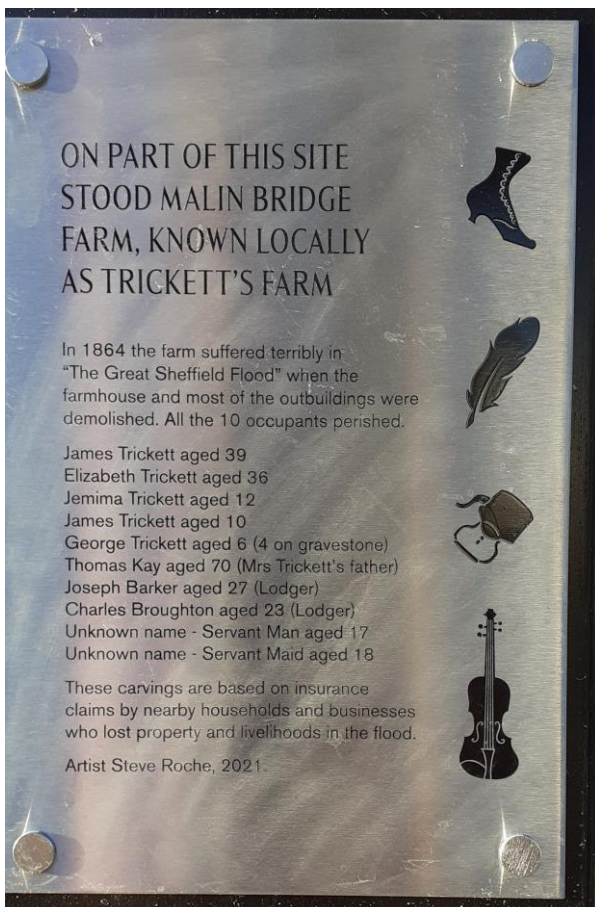
For more details see their Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/630345304192099>) – this can be viewed by anyone – you don't need to sign up to Facebook.

New commemorative feature wall on Stannington Road



The sculptured wall outside Lidl at Malin Bridge by artist Steve Roche

Have you seen the stone carving feature wall at the entrance to the new Lidl supermarket on Stannington Road? It was designed and carved by stonemason Steve Roche and is themed on the Great Sheffield Flood of 1864. Each of the carved items is taken from the Reparation Claims Archive (<https://www2.shu.ac.uk/sfca/>) and are things that were important in local businesses and that people valued in their homes. The grandfather clock is set to a few minutes to midnight, the time Dale Dyke Dam collapsed. There is a plaque with the names of the people from Trickett's Farm who died in the flood.



Fishing and crayfish

After seeing a trap pegged in the river, I thought I'd look up the regulations relating to fishing as I was unsure. Fishing in the Rivelin Valley is free, but a rod licence must be obtained from the Environment Agency for each person (including teenagers). Information is available from Sheffield City Council website:

<https://www.sheffielddirectory.org.uk/kb5/sheffield/directory/service.page?id=7FAMUHfQZhk>

A rod licence is available from this website:

<https://www.gov.uk/fishing-licences>

Non-native crayfish must not be trapped without written consent from the Environment Agency (EA) - this is the link for applying for a licence to trap crayfish:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/permission-to-trap-crayfish-eels-elvers-salmon-and-sea-trout>

Reporting an environmental incident

After a recent enquiry about the combined sewer outfall near the Holme Head weir (mentioned in the last newsletter), I asked what to do if dirty/polluted water was seen coming out of it. I was told that it only needs to be reported if it's flowing when there hasn't been heavy rain, so please call the Environment Agency incident hotline on 0800 80 70 60 if you see that happening. This hotline can also be used for reporting:

- damage or danger to the natural environment
- pollution to water or land
- poaching or illegal fishing
- dead fish or fish gasping for air
- main rivers blocked by a vehicle or fallen tree causing risk of flooding
- flooding from any river, stream, canal, natural spring or the sea
- incidents at Environment Agency-regulated waste sites
- illegal removals from watercourses
- unusual changes in river flow
- collapsed or badly damaged river or canal banks

Sue Shaw

The Recorder

Who would believe that just over a week ago some places in the UK were having floods, and a few days ago parts of Europe were also having devastating floods. Now we are having record high temperatures. Northern Ireland had its highest temperature recorded of 31.2deg. and we have had 27° C in the shade here. I feel as though I am going to melt and have no energy but, no doubt, many of you will love this weather. It has certainly made things grow and everywhere looks very lush. I think it has been the best year yet for the roses in my garden. My two broom bushes were a mass of yellow flowers and the buttercups and Cat's Ears on the lawn looked so bright and cheerful and attracted a lot of insects. The Cow Parsley also looked good and the seeds are now attracting Goldfinches. The various berry bushes have done well and I will let the Blackbirds eat what is left. I am not so forgiving of the Wood Pigeons. There are two males that fight every time they are near each other, and they are knocking the apples off the Granny Smith tree. I shall have to erect a sign with a pigeon in a red circle and see if that works – don't hold out much hope though.

This hot weather is certainly good for the insects and the garden is buzzing with bees and hoverflies. The Tree bumblebee, *Bombus hypnorum*, a millennial immigrant from the mainland, has taken over the Sparrows nesting box and one of my neighbours has the same problem. Has anyone else had their nest boxes usurped? Fortunately, there are plenty of bushes and hedges for the Sparrows and they have done very well this year. My garden has been full of juvenile Sparrows, Blackbirds, Bluetits, Dunnock and one Robin. On the evening of 23rd June the female Sparrowhawk came hurtling through the garden and crashed into the apple tree, emerging with either a young Sparrow or Blue Tit in its claws. Sad, but nature is both beautiful and cruel. There seems to be more spiders in the garden including the Crab spider, *Misumena vatia*, which sits in a flower head and takes on the colour of its surroundings, waiting to ambush its prey.

Zebra spiders, *Salticus scenicus*, can usually be seen on walls and they stalk their prey and jump on them with great accuracy. There are certainly plenty of Daddy long-legs spiders, *Pholcus phalangioides*, in the house and they can be quite a nuisance if you do not keep up with the dusting. Their main prey is other species of spider and it has expanded northwards over the past fifty years, probably one of many species taking advantage of a warming climate. Our moth trapping started slowly but since 3rd July we have had good numbers. In fact, I disturb quite a few when I am gardening. In the early hours of the 17th June I actually saw our Noctule bat catch a large moth that was flying near the lamp post – a first for me. I also often see the fox trotting up the drive at such times. We had a good selection of moths on the night of the 16th July including Buff Arches, which was pretending to be a stick on my bonsai Horse Chestnut tree.



Habrosyne pyritoides Buff Arches – hard to know where the twig stops and the moth begins.

I nearly missed it as the camouflage was so good. Notable amongst the others was a Light Emerald, a Swallowtail and three perfect Elephant Hawk moths. Quite often the moths have bits pecked out of the wings.



Deilephila elpenor Elephant hawk-moth

One year I had three large caterpillars of the Elephant Hawk moth on a Fuchsia bush, but as the Fuchsias were quite late this year, the caterpillars probably found a Rosebay Willowherb plant, which is their usual food, and I have some of those in the garden.

Although I saw a Cinnabar moth, I have yet to find any of their striking orange and black striped caterpillars on the ragwort. My frog breeding has been very successful this year and I have put 37 froglets near the pond. Of course, not all of them will survive but the ones that do will help to keep the slugs down. I also discovered three young newts in the tank and they will go out shortly. I shall have to be careful where I put my feet if I go into the garden in the evening.

Thank you for your records:-

Bob Townrow S10 – 4.5.21 - 6 pigeons, 1 collared dove and 2 starlings on lawn making most of contents of feeder blown off tree. Had a Crow round the pond this last month. Saw it take a frog from the pond and fly off with it as I have witnessed on 2 other occasions. It was pacing round the pond obviously looking for a frog, but later was pecking a dead pigeon on the lawn. It stripped it and there are feathers in a line along the lawn with no carcass left. Magpie fed on pigeon whenever Crow left. Anyone else had interesting things happen near the pond?

Neil Porter S6 – 5.5.21 – Saw juvenile Dipper being fed near Swallow Wheel. Neil's surveys for the BTO down the valley show Chiffchaff and Blackcap numbers seemed to be down. Song Thrush numbers up, 28 singing male Wrens between Hollins Lane and Manchester Road about normal; number of Swallows and House Martins are definitely down but Swifts are much the same; Jays and a family of Jackdaws devastated the feeders and squirrels have demolished his expensive squirrel proof feeder in 2 weeks. More squirrels in valley this year. Human dippers have increased enormously, sometimes perhaps 20 around the Rivelin pool, and lots of youngsters defying the 'Do not Swim' notices at Rivelin Dams. NB, this can be very dangerous as even though it is hot the water will be cold

and people get cramp and get into difficulties as we are hearing on the news this week. Breeding Warblers in Wyming Brook. 13.7.21 – Beautiful yellow and black Longhorn beetle, *Saperda scalaris* found on Neil's car windscreen.

Chris Roe S10 – 9.5.21 – Heron and Dipper at Swallow Weir. Heron just finishing lunch and Dipper flying up and down river, then sitting on rock and bobbing. Dogs came and went into river and Dipper flew away.

Sue Shaw S6 – 10.5.21 – 3 Swifts above garden; 15.6.21 – 14 ducklings and 3 Mallard; 6 ducklings and 3 Mandarin, and a crayfish trap at Havelock. NB, this should be reported to the Police Wildlife Crime Unit as these traps can be dangerous to other wildlife. 2.7.21- 6 Mandarin ducklings at Havelock Dam and 24 Mallard; 4 Mallard ducklings plus female at weir near café.

Pauline Higbid S10 – 26.6.21 – Pair of Bullfinch in garden.

Roger Kite S10 – 14.7.21 -Juvenile Heron on 3rd Coppice.

Joan Buckland S10 – 16.6.21 – Holly Blue; 22.6.21 – Holly Blue, Small Tortoiseshell; 2.7.21 – 2 Speckled Wood; 1.7.21 – 2 large cabbage White; 8.7.21 – small Tortoiseshell; 12.7.21 – 2 juvenile Crows – very noisy; 16.7.21 – 2 Ringlets; 18.7.21 – 1 Ringlet, 1 Large White; 20 screaming Swifts at 9.15pm

Joan Buckland
19.7.21



Barn owl hunting in the field by Tofts lane, in the Rivelin Valley. Photo by Mark Bateman 22 March 2021

Task Team

Second Coppice had been a real issue all winter as its blocked outlet caused flood waters to overflow onto the footpath washing away the surface and revealing broken house bricks probably from the original Second Coppice Mill building.



Second Coppice water floods over the footpath as its exit into the river is blocked. The flood water is so severe that it is too dangerous for contractors to attempt to clear the blockage.



An uneven stretch of house bricks is revealed after the flood water had receded - probably from the old mill building demolished in the early 20thC.

I'm pleased to say that Council contractors have finally removed the blockage and resurfaced the footpath. The blockage was caused by an old stone gatepost that had broken off its foundation next to the gulley that took the water under the footpath. This had more than likely been maliciously pushed into the gulley and at the moment, the recovered stone is in the same vicinity and so it could happen again.



The cause of the blockage at Second Coppice was eventually revealed – an old stone gate post had been pushed into the gulley.

May Task Day

At the other end of Second Coppice there is a descending footpath that was in great need of repair. The May task day saw nine volunteers install pipework to divert future flood water and restore the steps.



Before – Dangerous steps down to Second Coppice



After – Restored steps down to Second Coppice

The topping was stored in a large layby and had to be barrowed down the long path and poured into position. I have to say a huge thank you to the RVCG website manager Greg Shaw and his wife Emma who volunteered to fill the barrows with barely enough time to catch breath.



Task Team members Greg and Emma Shaw. Greg is more used to inputting data into a computer than gravel into a wheelbarrow.

Hedley Beard Memorial Bench

On the same task day in May, Keith Kendall took a small team further down the nature trail to the foot of the green opposite King Edwards to install a memorial bench for the Beard family. David Lyon, the recently retired RVCG Treasurer, asked the RVCG to install a memorial bench on behalf of his son-in-law's family. This had been delayed for almost a year due to covid restrictions.

David Lyon sent the following for the newsletter:-



The Beard family L to R – Paul (Ed's son), Judy (Ed's wife), Helen (Paul's wife and Dave Lyon's daughter), Megan and Sam (Paul and Helen's children), Craig (at the back and Ed's second son) and Henry with the hat (one of Craigs sons)

"Following the death of Hedley, the family were looking for a suitable memorial to celebrate his life.

Various suggestions were considered however as both Ed and his wife Judy are local Sheffielders and have spent many years living locally it was suggested that a bench in the Rivelin Valley might be appropriate.

On contacting Keith Kendall, RVCG Task Team Leader, it was confirmed that a bench was still available, and a site was agreed with the family.

Although the bench installation was delayed due to the Covid restrictions, it was the first job undertaken when restrictions were eased in May.

The bench is regularly visited by the family as a place to gather to celebrate the special days in Ed's life.

The younger members of the family also enjoy the location by rolling down the adjacent hillside whilst older members of the family sit to reflect.

The family have sent their thanks to the RVCG Task Team for the installation of the bench in such a beautiful spot and for giving up their Sunday to do the work."

David Lyon



Memorial Bench Installation for the Beard Family and yes, that is Greg and Emma Shaw again - this time doing synchronised hole digging. Roger Cose and Keith Kendall are working together to build the bench.

June Task Day

Rivelin Mill Wildlife Pond

Early June also saw the task team in action to provide the next stage for the wildlife pond at Rivelin Mill. You may remember that back in January, the Sheffield City Council had asked their contractor to create a clean rubble and mud shelf for the RVCG to plant into. Roger Kite and Joan Buckland made up a list of desired plants and then went on a mission to purchase them from the plant specialist, Naturescape, at Langar near Nottingham. Unfortunately, it was a blisteringly hot month and the water level in Rivelin Mill had fallen below the shelf. Nevertheless, it was necessary to get the plants installed as soon as possible and so an ad-hoc task day was arranged for Saturday 11th June. Early that morning, Roger Kite, Graham Appleby and Roger Cose helped top up the silt from an adjacent pond using blood, sweat and wheelbarrows. They were later joined by another 6 volunteers who helped plant up the shelf. This was then covered in wire mesh to give them a chance to take root. Joan and her husband Paul then made regular visits over the following days to keep the plants moist while the water level remained low and the weather hot.



Phil Brewins (front), Roger Kite, Joan Buckland (prostrate) and Sue Shaw (behind the camera) beginning the planting



Scott Berg, Joan Buckland, Roger Cose and Roger Kite with Sue Shaw behind the camera.



Ever since the restoration of Rivelin Corn Mill Pond in 2007, it has been Roger Kite's dream to upgrade the pond into a wildlife pond full of plants where waterfowl, fish and insects can thrive. There remains a lot to do although the use of contractors is expensive and therefore the RVCG will look at ways of achieving a fully stocked wildlife pond through more economical means and through the use of its task team volunteers. Thank you to Dave Aspinall, now the retired SCC Woodlands Manager for making this happen.

Graham Appleby

The end of June task day was a continuation of the steps at Second Coppice. Heavy rain had washed away the steps down to the lower footpath adjacent to the river and it is these that we replaced.



Task Team volunteer Scott Berg smoothing out the footpath topping.



Task Team volunteer Antony Davenport putting the finishing touches to the steps.



Task Team volunteers Graham Axelby and Graham Appleby working the barrows.

The work was demanding for just four volunteers, but we all dug in and finished the job to help provide safe passage along this footpath for the visiting public.

Graham Appleby

Poets Corner

Today's poem comes from Elizabeth R. Walker who wrote the following:

"Thank you for your interest in the poem published in the Sheffield Telegraph. The booklet in which this appears is called 'Nature's Way' and it contains three poems about Rivelin and lots of others relating to Bradfield, Strines and Damflask, as well as general poems of observations of animals and birds. It also contains associated photos I have taken in these areas. I am happy for you to print the poem in your quarterly newsletter and if you would be so kind as to mention its source. Booklets can be purchased from me @ £7.50 plus postage. Orders can be made through this email address - erwalker715@btinternet.com"

Roscoe Bank Dam – Rivelin

If you should stray a little way
From the main path
You could come across
This old dam
Beneath elder, ivy and sycamore
Where willow and stones weep
Water diverted from the river.
Derelict, oozing decay,
Coated in moss, lichen and slime,
It crumbles under creeping vines and roots
Which grasp at gaps and crevices in its walls
Held together grimly by an iron arch.
The smell of rot rises rank from the gaping
Dank and dark
Where water drips and leaves drop
To a stagnant pool-
A place which even rats might shun,
A desolate reminder of an industry long gone
And a reason for most to move on.

Elizabeth R. Walker