

# Newsletter

Promoting and protecting heritage and wildlife



## Autumn 2024 no 130

Welcome to this issue of the Newsletter. We are devoting our front page to Ken Shail's life story. We also have all our usual features. Your contributions to the Newsletter are always welcome. If you want to contact the Group, details are on page 11.

### The long life of Ken Shail

Ken Shail passed away on 9th August aged 99. He had lived in Crookes or Crosspool, on the margin of the Rivelin Valley, for most of that time, and it was a persistent thread in his life. Ken was an honorary Yorkshireman. He was born in Gillingham (Kent) in June 1925 but the family moved almost immediately to Eyam Road in Crookes, and then Hallgate Road around 1930.

Crosspool was going through a huge transition from rural hamlet to suburbia. Ken saw farms, water powered mills in the Rivelin Valley, a blacksmith on Lydgate Lane and old roads through Ashopton and Derwent villages before they were lost below Ladybower Dam. He explored Rivelin, as many of us have, and broke his arm down there when he was 11 falling off a dry-stone wall.

In 1942, he joined the Home Guard - a real-life Private Pike - and could sometimes be seen in the early morning, walking back through Crosspool with his rifle, following overnight exercises at Fulwood Booth near Redmires Dams. He also met Marjorie Fordham ('Jen') in the same year. She had been playing tennis on the newly created Carver Street Methodist Church sports fields at Den Bank and had a chance encounter with Ken on her way home at the Crosspool chip shop. Following army service in the REME (1943-1947) he proposed to her on the crags at the end of Moorbank Road and they lived at Toftwood Road for the next 12 years. Visits to Rivelin Post Office and Wyming Brook are constant themes in family photos from the 1940s and 1950s.

Following a couple of years living and working in India, Ken and Marjorie returned to Crosspool in 1963, and set up home in Coppice View, where Ken lived for the next 61 years. Parenthood followed with the arrival of their son, Robin. He has many happy memories of exploring Rivelin as a youngster with his Dad,

including fishing for sticklebacks in Wolf Wheel Dam, going for walks from Redmires to Rivelin, and for drives and walks around the tracks at Wyming Brook.



Ken retired when he was 60, in 1985, due to the closure of the GEC Traction works in Attercliffe, after over 40 years working for the company. He had an active retirement but in 1996 his eyesight started failing, due to macular degeneration, and he lost Marjorie to cancer later that year. Ken became heavily involved in the Rivelin Valley Conservation Group and was a regular on their task days. For a long period Coppice View became the location of their annual summer barbecue and the garage a storage site for tools.

The easy-going sociability and lunches at various hostelrys in the Rivelin Valley with Roger, Dave, Keith, Graham and others certainly helped him get back on his feet. Ken had never been a huge pet-lover, but he formed a close bond with Bracken, Roger Kite's dog. He loved nature and wildlife and was happy to let foxes take over part of his garden for numerous dens.

Ken had three grandsons, Kim, Max and Harry whom he introduced to the Rivelin Valley, and they joined his 85th birthday celebration at 'The Rivelin'.

Ken's funeral on 28th August was followed by a wake at The Three Merry Lads, appropriately looking over the Valley that he loved.

Robin Shail

## Task Days

Having complimented the task team on their achievement in restoring of the nature trail in upper Rivelin, it was rather upsetting to see that a flash flood during Monday 30<sup>th</sup> September has caused further damage to the same sections. However, the damage is minimal and can easily be repaired although the Council's footpath restoration of Hind Wheel was completely washed away. The dam wall at Hind Wheel is fully intact and it is just the surfacing that has been washed away and we need to give some thought into how we can protect our footpath surfaces from flash floods.



*June 24 Hind Wheel (East) repaired by Sheffield City Council*



*Sep 30<sup>th</sup> washed away again in the recent flash flood*



*June 24 Hind Wheel (West) repaired by Sheffield City Council*



*Sep 30<sup>th</sup> The footpath topping washed straight into the dam. Fortunately, the dam wall remains intact.*



*The recently restored stepping stones at Roscoe Wier have been dislodged by this tree washed down during the flash flood.*



Driftwood at Home Head Wheel shows the height of the flash flood of between 1 and 2 metres.

### July 24<sup>th</sup> Corporate Task Day

I ran a corporate task day towards the end of July for BNG and began work on the footpaths at Holme Head Wheel.

*'The Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Services Team is within Natural England, which is based in Sheffield and York. BNG is a new approach to development which seeks to reduce the loss of biodiversity as much as possible, and losses that do occur due to development must be replaced and increased by 10%. You can find more information on BNG here: [Biodiversity net gain - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/biodiversity-net-gain)'*



*Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Services Team*

*"The team had a great day, and, on their behalf, I'd like to thank all those involved with the organisation of it."*

*Benjamin Tinsley*

Thank you to Ranger Ryan Atkin for supporting the event and for RVCV volunteer Roger Goodwin for his assistance.

### July 28<sup>th</sup> RVCV Task Day

Following the corporate task day, the intention was to continue the footpath work at Holme Head Wheel, but I felt it was more important to pay a visit to Rivelin Corn Mill as the site had become very overgrown.



The dipping platform was showing serious signs of decay and was taped off and taken out of service. The 'John Monach' memorial bench behind the platform was also showing signs of decay and the family have asked me to replace it at the earliest opportunity. We are also planning a memorial bench for Ken Shail in the same location but may have to wait for platform repairs or replacement.



*A haircut for the willow tunnel at Rivelin Corn Mill*

The willow tunnel was very overgrown, and we gave it a severe haircut and replanted the cuttings to try and thicken up the sides. Large sections of the willow have died, and I have been trying to understand why this might be. One theory is that there is a lot of shade from mature trees. Also, willow needs to be constantly cut back which forces new shoots on the lower stems.



*Clearing the undergrowth and verges (with a smile) at Rails Road car park (Rivelin Corn Mill)*



*Roger Cose and Scott Berg on sapling planting duty – donated by Keith Kendall*



*And finally, the team photo at the end of an exhausting day which Rivelin Corn Mill looks all the better for.*

## **September 29<sup>th</sup> RVCG Task Day**

Ranger Ryan suggested that we do some birch bashing on the edge of Carver Fields (which I've always known as Millstone Edge but apparently, it's called Den Bank). We had a good turnout of 15 volunteers plus me and Ryan. The bank side is predominantly bilberry but with small trees and bracken threatening to take over. Our volunteers did an amazing job of clearing the brash. We also cleared some of the footpaths along the edge of Carver Fields and provided better access to the memorial benches dotted along the edge.



*Birch bashing on Den Bank with Stannington flats in the distance*



*Ed and Gareth installing a memorial bench*

We took the opportunity to install a new memorial bench donated by the RVCG for longstanding committee member, Margaret Sanderson who sadly passed away last year. The bench is in a stunning location at the head of the valley on Den Bank and now with a dedicated plaque funded by her son Jerry.

Margaret Sanderson was an original RVCG committee member from 1991 and held the roles of membership secretary and newsletter editor for most of that time.



*Gareth and Ed admiring the view from the newly installed bench*



*The dedication to Margaret Sanderson provided by her son Jerry*



The steps leading down from the lower Carver field were in a bit of a dangerous state and so volunteers Ed and Gareth helped restore the steps to ensure safe passage. They also added an extra step at the bottom to make the steps more accessible for those with a smaller gait.



*The RVCG task team volunteers pose for a photograph on the edge of Carver Fields.*

I am hoping to continue our footpath repairs at Holme Head Wheel however a recent storm and flash flood has undone some of our previous footpath work and so we may have to divert some of our resource to that.

Text & photographs  
Graham Appleby, Task Team Leader

## Reporting anti-social use of footpaths by cyclists and motorcyclists, and survey of footpath signs

Following various incidents of bicycles and motorcycles on the Rivelin Trail in places where they are not permitted, we approached Sheffield City Council for their comments. SCC's Sam Beaton provided the following information and asked us to let him know if further signage is needed at any particular locations where clarification is needed.

SCC does not permit cycling on any of the public footpaths in the Rivelin Valley. Motorcyclists are not allowed to use Footpaths, Bridleways or Restricted Byways, but they are allowed to use Byways Open to All Traffic. If you do see motorbikes where they are not allowed, please report to the police via [www.southyorks.police.uk](http://www.southyorks.police.uk) (choose the 'antisocial behaviour option'), or via their social media. Give a description of the incident and let them know where and when, with photos and videos if safe to do so without taking risks.

Descriptions of the different categories of Public Rights of Way and who can use them, and where these paths are located can be found on the SCC Public Rights of Way web page (<https://www.sheffield.gov.uk/roads-pavements/prow>) under the Definitive Map and Statement tab. Horse riders and cyclists are permitted to use all the Permissive as well as the Public Bridleways in the Rivelin Valley (the permissive Bridleways have "Perm" in the reference number).

SCC considers that all the SCC paths in the Rivelin Valley are adequately signed in most places with the relevant roadside signs, plus blue and yellow arrows at most path junctions, plus small black and white signs where needed to make it extra clear that those paths are for pedestrians only. However, the RVCG Committee is concerned that the signs may be inadequate or unclear in places, and so we recently put out an appeal for volunteers to carry out a detailed survey of the signs and waymark posts on footpaths and bridleways around the valley. We will report the findings to the Council, giving locations of missing markers and suggestions for helpful additions. Several people have come forward already, so that project should be underway soon.

Sue Shaw

## Walkley Heritage Open Day event September 7, 2024

A group of RVCG committee and other members assembled to set up our HOD stall indoors this year at the Community Centre in Fir Street so we didn't have to erect gazebos or worry about the weather. The venue was spacious and welcoming.

The Community Centre building was originally Walkley Liberal Reform Club, and is built "in a minimal Art Nouveau style", with some interesting features.

We had displays about 'Tracks' as this was the HOD theme and had the 'Walking the Rivelin' book for sale as well as other books about the area. Our model of the valley and the working model of a water wheel were admired by visitors. During the afternoon we were pleased to welcome local councillor and Leader of Sheffield City Council, Tom Hunt, who was happy to talk with us about the challenges of looking after the valley.

Christine Roe



Tom Hunt surrounded by members of RVCG

## Tool Donations

Thank you to Kevin and Linda Holt of Wood Lane who have donated a selection of saws and hammers to the RVCG Task Team following the passing of their parents.

Also, thank you to the family of John Lindsay who was a lifetime member of the RVCG and recently passed away. He had a huge collection of tools in his garage many of which were donated to the RVCG. Some of the tools will be useful for the RVCG Task Team and others will be offered to members for a donation.

Graham Appleby

## **Open Meeting September 12, 2024**

### **“Putting the Sheaf back into Sheffield (and the Porter too)”**

We had a good turnout for the first of our autumn meetings when our speaker was Simon Ogden talking about the work and plans of the Sheaf and Porter Valleys Trust.

The trust was set up to influence developments along the rivers in the inner city, as they are largely culverted within the ring road. Simon talked us through the importance of the rivers to the history of Sheffield. Historically, Endcliffe Park and the Porter valley were mentioned in the City’s first Development Plan of 1924 by Patrick Abercrombie as ‘The chain of green and blue spaces linking the suburbs to the moors remains one of Sheffield’s unique jewels.’ Recent redevelopments such as Castlegate reflect this idea. The Castle itself was lost in the Civil War, and the area was industrialised in the 1800s and the river covered over between buildings and used for sewers and discharges of industrial waste. Now the Sheaf is being deculverted and will be visible in a new landscaped area.

The River Porter is culverted under the Railway Station on Platform 5, where it joins the Sheaf, and the trust also hopes to put in a viewing area for this. A collapsed section of the culverted Porter in Decathlon car park is being ‘daylighted’ and there are plans to expose other areas along the Porter Valley and re-naturalise the brook. This could help with bringing back wildlife and reducing flood risk. There are also plans to develop a Sheaf Valley Trail from Dore & Totley to the Don.

Between Ponds Forge and the confluence of the Sheaf and the Don at Blonk Street is the Megatron, a Victorian storm drain and a culverted stretch of the Sheaf. The tunnel has been reinforced over time to support Park Square roundabout and the tram bridge above it and in the summer can be visited on a guided tour.

This was a fascinating talk about the future of riverscapes within our city. Further information can be found at:  
[www.sheafportertrust.org](http://www.sheafportertrust.org)

Christine Roe

## **Open Meeting October 10, 2024**

### **“From Bell Hagge Green to Carver Fields. Crosspool’s Hidden History”**

This was another well attended meeting with Dan Eaton explaining the history of the area now known as Carver Fields. Dan is a teacher and archaeologist living on Hagg Lane who used the Covid lockdowns to walk the local area and undertake extensive online research.

The fields owned by the Sheffield Methodist Circuit were used as an outdoor space from 1880s onwards for inner city dwellers from Carver Street Methodist Church. In the 1920s this was expanded with a sports club, tennis courts and clubhouse, followed after 1945 by cricket and football pitches. Since the 1980s the area has reverted ‘back to nature’ and the sports activities can only be imagined.

Dan described his research which shows how the area has changed over the centuries. Bell Hagge Green is first shown on the 1795 Fairbanks map (see page 12) and as Hagg Green on the 1855 OS map. A green is ‘an area of common land, covered with grass, near isolated farms or hamlets’ according to local historian, David Hey. Dan’s research also covered the origins of names in the area, Bell being the call of the stag and Hagg an area of holly cultivated for winter fodder. It could even date back to the Norman Conquest. Hagg Lane Farm and Bell Hagg Farm are now gone, but historian, Sidney Addy wrote and illustrated the ‘cruck barn’ of medieval origin at Hagg Lane Farm. Quarrying took place on Den Bank in Victorian times and the space was then used as a tip before municipal refuse collections. Paths and tracks linked Crosspool to Crookes and the wider landscape, allowing transport of goods in and out of the area and gateposts still stand marking field boundaries which were bank and ditch before walling was built later.

Dan spoke about items found on the fields, by himself and metal detectorists. A clay pipe he found dates to 1730-1760, found near the footpath at the edge, looking out up the valley – perhaps dropped by someone admiring the view we still have today?

Dan was an excellent speaker and invited comments and questions – we hope further investigations may discover more. The story has been written up in a booklet, which he sold at the end of his talk.

Christine Roe

## Open Meetings coming up

Please join us on **Thursday 14th November**, when local ornithologist **Dave Gosney** will talk about "**Birds in the Rivelin and Loxley Valleys – past present and future**".



During lockdown, when he couldn't go birding elsewhere, Dave undertook to do a series of monthly walks to count the birds within walking distance of his home at Malin Bridge. He was surprised by what he found and, more importantly, didn't find, especially when compared to counts he did over 50 years ago. This talk describes his findings, showing how bird numbers have changed in this area since he was a teenager, and includes some speculations on what changes we might expect in the future.

On **Thursday 9th January 2025**, RVCG Task Team leader and former Chair, **Graham Appleby**, will tell us all about "**The Fascinating Lives of Bees, Ants and Wasps**", their common ancestry, biology and behaviour.

The final two talks for the 2024–2025 season will have a river theme. The subject of the talk by **Jan Hobot**, Head Riverkeeper at the Haddon Estate, on **Thursday 13th February 2025**, will be "**Haddon Estate: A Sustainable Future**".

On **Thursday 20th March 2025**, local River Rangers and river activists, **John Blewitt** and **Jacqueline Diaz Nieto**, will tell us about "**Rivelin River Health: the good, the bad and the ugly**". More details of those two meetings will follow in the next Newsletter.

All meetings are held at Stephen Hill Methodist Church, 547 Manchester Road, Sheffield S10 5PL, and start at 7:30 pm. Do come and join us for interesting talks, updates on what's happening in the valley and an opportunity to chat over refreshments afterwards.

Sue Shaw

## Ladybirds

About a year ago, I removed my caravan cover and discovered a bunch of Ladybirds (known as a 'loveliness') overwintering on one corner of the cover. I photographed them and then carefully brushed them off so that I could store the cover without harming them.



*A 'loveliness' of ladybirds preparing for winter hibernation*

It was unfortunate that we had to remove the cover and disturb the ladybirds. However, the following spring.....

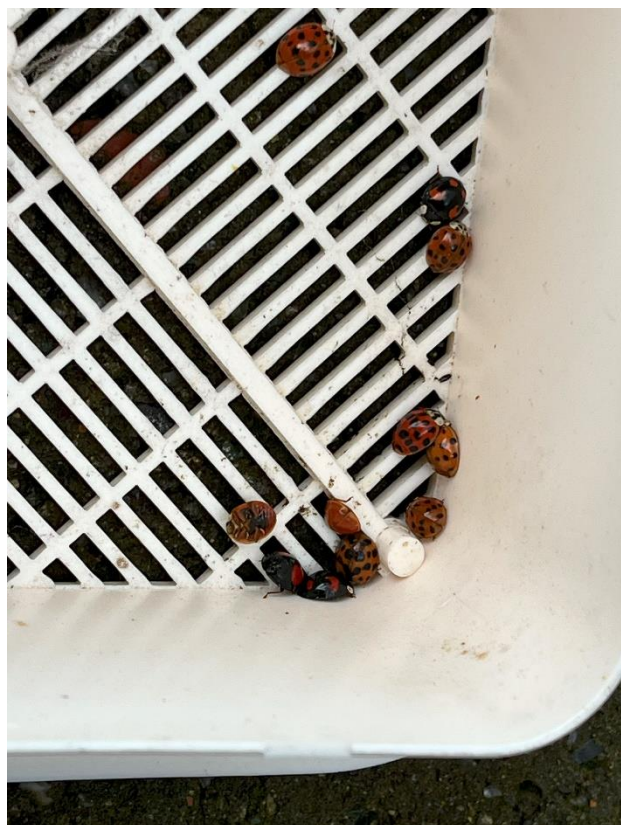


*Possibly the same 'loveliness' of ladybirds having apparently overwintered in the caravan air vent*



Come the following spring earlier this year, we had our first outing in the caravan on our anniversary weekend and we set off for the Norfolk coast.

One morning after waking, I noticed a load of insects in the air vent above the bed. On inspection, it appeared to be the same 'loveliness' of ladybirds that I had discovered and dispensed with the previous autumn. Despite my wife's anxiety of sleeping in close proximity to such insects, I managed to convince her to ignore them until we returned back home. I then photographed them once again before releasing them.



*A closer view of the air vent ladybirds*

The scientific name for the ladybird is **Coccinellidae**, a small type of beetle. From the Latin *coccineus* meaning 'scarlet'. There are over 6000 known species worldwide and 26 known species in the UK. Most species are carnivorous predators preying on other insects such as aphids and scale insects. One of the most common ladybirds is the 7 spot (*coccinella septempunctata*) – a scarlet ladybird with 7 black spots. There's also a 2 spot, 4 spot, 14 spot, 22 spot and the harlequin is black with large orange spots. My little collection above was mainly comprised of the 7 spot with a few 4 spot amongst them.



*Cream-spot ladybird (Calvia quattuordecimguttata)*

They also come in many different colours other than scarlet – black, yellow, orange and brown and some are striped.

Females tend to be slightly larger than the males. They are promiscuous breeders reproducing in spring and summer. Often their eggs are laid close to colonies of prey to provide food for the young larvae. As with most insects, they develop from larva to pupa to adult. Their forewings have evolved into hard shells that cover the delicate hind flight wings when not in flight. They have two large compound eyes, clubbed antennae with 7–11 segments and powerful toothed mandibles. They are generally thought of as a beneficial insect

Text and photographs by Graham Appleby

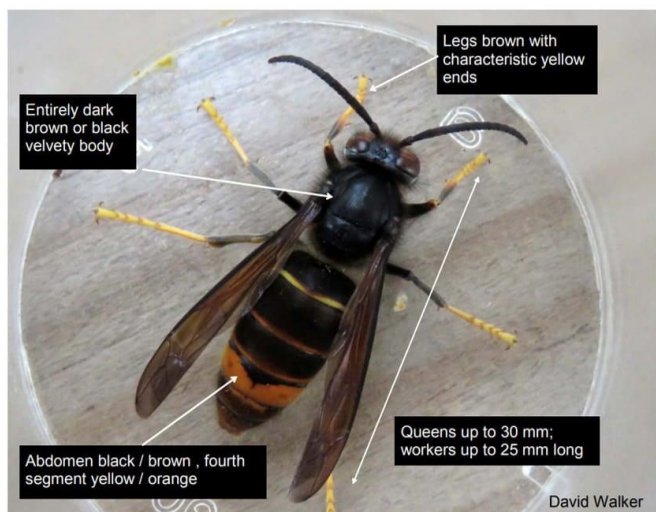
### **Asian Hornet Alert**

Bee keeping is becoming an increasing challenge these days with the unpredictable climate and various pests and diseases. Keeping bees healthy is a real skill that is learned over many years of experience and by following the advice of our master beekeepers and information provided by the National Bee Unit (NBU). The NBU delivers the Bee Health Programmes on behalf of the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA).

High on the agenda is the Asian Hornet which was accidentally imported into France in 2004. From that one queen, European bees are now under siege from this invasive species which can be found in 11 European countries at the last count including Britain. There have been over 100 confirmed sightings in Britain since 2016 with 85 nests identified and destroyed. They eat a range of insects

including bees and a few Asian hornets can easily overwhelm a bee colony, and European beekeepers are reporting huge losses.

We are asking you to keep an eye out for this unwanted pest and to report it if you see one, ideally with photographic evidence. More information can be found on the link below and I will also be discussing it at the RVCG Open Meeting 7:30pm 9<sup>th</sup> Jan at Stephen Hill Church when I give my talk on 'Bees, Ants and Wasps'. See you there!



[So you think you've seen a yellow-legged hornet? » APHA - National Bee Unit - BeeBase](#)

Graham Appleby

## THE RECORDER – AUTUMN 2024

Another year, another autumn. At this time last year, we were only days away from Storm Babet which hit us on 20<sup>th</sup> October causing a lot of damage down the valley. The weather on 30<sup>th</sup> September and 1<sup>st</sup> October this year was misty and very, very wet. Unfortunately, the amount of rain that fell has caused yet more damage along the river. A tree has damaged the stepping stones at Roscoe Weir, which had been repaired by the council. Part of the footpath round Hind Wheel, which had also been repaired, has been swept away again. Unless something is done to slow the force of the water this may become a regular occurrence.

There was some nice, warm weather in August enabling people to do some gardening. The ginnel from Stephen Hill has been very colourful with all the wildflowers and garden escapes including Red and White Valerian. Despite this it has not been a good year for butterflies. Peacock, Red Admiral and Small Tortoiseshell have only appeared in ones or twos. The most common in my garden have been Gatekeepers, Speckled Wood, Large and Small White. Moth numbers have also been

down on last year. The wet weather in Spring may have been the cause. Moths we have caught include Willow Beauty, Common Marbled Carpet, Dusky Thorn and Angle Shades. I was lucky enough to see the Angle Shades moth emerging and watched it pump up its wings.



*Angle Shades moth*

It has a very distinctive pattern on its wings which makes it one of the easier moths to identify. There is nothing else quite like it. The colours are olive green and pink when fresh. The Ivy is now in flower and attracting Wasps which, like moths, are decreasing in numbers. Wasps are useful in the garden and eat Aphids which are a pest.

Moths that fly at night are the main prey of bats. Bats detect them by emitting clicks of ultrasonic sound which are reflected back to the bat (ultrasonic echolocation). Bats need to eat a lot of moths to keep them surviving the long winter months. According to an article by Stuart Reynolds in the Royal Entomological Society's journal *Antenna* from which this information is derived, the bats have a success rate of 30 – 40% and can eat as much as 85% of their body weight every day. Sounds like hard work to me! Moths are not the helpless victims you might imagine. So why do the bats fail in 60% of hunts? Just as some daytime flying moths and butterflies have bright colours and patterns to warn prospective predators that they are distasteful (for example the Cinnabar Moth), night-flying moths have ways to avoid being eaten. Amazingly they can hear the ultrasonic clicks of the bat and take evasive action. The moths' hearing structure is generally on the thorax (chest) and comprises an air-filled cavity with a tightly stretched membrane over. They can also emit ultrasonic sounds which confuse the bat. Furthermore, they can send signals to the bat that they are distasteful. The scales of moths can also play a part in avoiding capture and much research is being undertaken on this aspect. Nature is full of surprises and there must be so much more to discover. Some

people with impaired sight are also able to use echolocation to avoid obstacles.

Now is the time to look for fungi. They can be very photogenic especially when on tree stumps. I saw some on the grass verge on Stephen Hill that looked just like edible mushrooms, but it is not worth taking the risk as there are many toxic fungi that look very similar. Shield Bugs are also about now. I often see them on brambles. Spiders' webs are looking good with droplets of water from the mist, and we are getting plenty of mist this autumn. It feels more like November. Maybe we will get an Indian summer to help us survive the cold winter months. Migrants, to and from the UK, are on the move, either seeking warmer climes or looking for better feeding grounds. The Swifts are long gone, and several flocks of geese have flown over the valley. Keep a lookout for the arrival of Waxwings, Redwings, Fieldfares and Bramblings. The cold weather has arrived in northern Sweden so they may be on their way. We had our first ground frost on 11<sup>th</sup> October this year and last year it was on 11<sup>th</sup> November. Is this a sign of a harder winter to come? Time to sort out those winter woollies.

Did anyone see the Northern Lights on 10<sup>th</sup> October, after the very interesting talk by Dan Eaton about Bell Hagge Green? It was a clear night and stars were visible on the walk back home. At 9.45pm I noticed a reddish light in the sky over Crosspool looking from Den Bank. I took several photos which revealed the Northern Lights. The only colour showing was red, but it was impressive all the same.



Thank you for your sightings:-

Roger Kite S10 – 30.7.24 – 1 Red Admiral, 2 Gatekeeper in garden; 26.9.24 -pair of Dippers in river near Roscoe; 2.10.24 – female Tawny Owl calling in garden; 24.9.24 – 200+ Geese at Redmires.

Graham Appleby S10 – 19.6.24 – pair of Heron on Hind Wheel.

Jack Nuttgens S6 – 14.7.24 – 2 Grey Wagtail and young Cormorant above Uppercut Wheel. 20.8.24 – Kingfisher and Heron on pond near 2<sup>nd</sup> Coppice; 2 Grey Wagtails in river near Rails Road car park; Moorhen on pond at Nether Cut and 2 young Mandarin; Also saw Speckled Wood, white Butterflies and Damsels and Dragonflies on the walk.

Jane Groves S6 – 14/16.7.24 – Had a good view of a Cormorant near Hind Wheel.

Sue Shaw S10 – 8.10.24 – Heron on Hind Wheel; Kingfisher flying down river nearby; 12+ Mandarin and few Mallard on Wolf Wheel.

Joan Buckland S10 – Regular garden visitors – Robin, Sparrows, Dunnock, Blue, Great and Coal Tits, Crow, Blackbirds, Wood Pigeon; Saw 20 screaming Swifts on 29.7.24 and 4 on 30.7.24 (last sighting); 17.9.24 heard male and female Tawny Owls; 17/19/25<sup>th</sup> heard or saw Geese flying over; Jay appearing recently and female Sparrowhawk.

Joan Buckland 16.10.24

#### Contacts

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

