

# Newsletter

Promoting and protecting heritage and wildlife



## Winter 2025 no 131

Welcome to the Winter Newsletter. Please see details below on renewing your membership. Enclosed you will find notice of the AGM on 10 April, including a booking form for the optional Pie and Peas Supper which will follow the formal business.

We hope you enjoy Andy's article about his ancestors. We would welcome more of your contributions about the Valley, its people, history, and wildlife, to include in future editions.

### Membership Renewal

2025 Membership is now due. The simplest payment method is via our website at <http://rivelinvalley.org.uk/join.php>. (If any details have changed since last year, please also tell me at [rvcg.members@btinternet.com](mailto:rvcg.members@btinternet.com).) If you prefer to pay by cash or cheque, a membership form is enclosed. Cost remains the same at £3 per household.

If you have any queries about your membership, you can email me at [rvcg.members@btinternet.com](mailto:rvcg.members@btinternet.com).

Graham Roe, Membership Officer

### Contacts

Chairman	VACANCY
Treasurer	Christine Roe
Secretary	VACANCY
Membership	Graham Roe
Task Team	Graham Appleby
Newsletter	C & G Roe
Group Recorder	Joan Buckland
Website	Greg Shaw
Speaker Organiser	Ciarán McInerney
Conservation Advisor	Roger Kite

If you wish to contact us please email [rivelin.valley@gmail.com](mailto:rivelin.valley@gmail.com)  
or visit the website  
[www.rivelinvalley.org.uk](http://www.rivelinvalley.org.uk)

### Demise of the Willow tree

A casualty of the last lot of wintry weather was the Willow Tree near the café in the Valley. The tree had been a feature of the Park for a long time. We believe the tree was planted as part of the Festival of Britain construction of the original paddling pools in 1951, and we suspect it had been weakened by periods of intense rainfall over the last few years. It fell blocking the path. The remains have now been removed by the Council. We hope to work with the Council to provide a suitable replacement.



Sue Shaw 2020



Owen Roe 2025



## Task Team

### October 24 Task Day

Eighteen volunteers turned out on a glorious task day at Havelock Dam also known as Walkley Bank Tilt. The task was to remove thorny brash and tree saplings from around the edge of the dam.



*Havelock Dam on a bright sunny task day.*

There is also a bench to the side of my trailer, but the wooden top was rotten and so Ranger Ryan provided a new bench top which we fixed to the existing metal stanchions. The bench was an inch too short and so volunteer carpenter, Roger Cose added end pieces to give an excellent finish to the bench which also protected the end grain.



*Roger Cose takes a well-earned rest.*



*A local resident inspects the new bench*



*A few task team volunteers manage to raise a smile after a hard day's graft.*

### The John Lindsay Bench

We also took the opportunity to install the Lindsay memorial bench close to Mousehole Forge bridge where long time RVCG member John was sadly found having failed to return home. I later met up with John's family and installed a plaque onto the bench.



*John's family by the bench.*



John's family have kindly donated many of Johns huge tool collection to the RVCG and we have currently raised £195.



## 24 Nov Task Day

The days before the November task day were incredibly wet but I decided to risk running the task day in the hope that the weather would improve.



*Glen Bridge at the S bend flooded following heavy rain despite the recent installation of twin gulleys.*

Over 20 volunteers braved the weather and were rewarded when, unbelievably, the rain stopped a few minutes before we met at Nether Cut Wheel near to the S bend. The task was to restore the footpaths at Nether Cut wheel and Ranger Ryan had organised the delivery of 16 tons of sandstone for the job.



*The sandstone is barrowed into place, raked smooth and then compacted with the RVCG vibrator.*

Despite our best efforts the footpaths remained soggy and we did our best to clear existing drains and provided new drainage to try and reduce the surface water.



*Kevin and Ed install revetment boards to contain the sandstone.*

## 30 Nov Corporate Task Day with the Sheffield University Conservation Society (SUCS)

SUCS regularly work with conservation groups throughout the city and have worked with the RVCG on several occasions over the years. I decided to do further work at Holme Head Wheel with the six SUCS volunteers and four RVCG volunteers and Ranger Bob. They all worked extremely hard in really soggy conditions.



*The footpath is prepared for its topping of sandstone*



*Sheffield University Conservation Society volunteers*

Graham Appleby, Task Team Leader



## Open Meeting, November 14, 2024

*Birds in the Rivelin and Loxley Valleys – past, present and future.*

Dave Gosney is a Sheffield man and lives at Malin Bridge. He has had a lifelong interest in nature and particularly in the birds of the Rivelin and Loxley valleys. He has completed many surveys of birds in these areas over the last 50 years for various natural history societies, starting as a teenager on Loxley Common and Little Matlock Wood in the 1970's. There have been many changes during this time and Dave illustrated these with detailed graphs. He made the most of his time during Covid when we were allowed to go for walks. He spent this time surveying the Rivelin Valley before it got as busy as it is now with dog walkers and joggers. Since his early tetrad surveys in 1975, 50% of the species found had disappeared by 2021. The Rivelin has many types of habitat and notable species that have gone are Grey Partridge, Tree Pipit, Willow Tit and Green Woodpecker.



*Yellowhammer*

Yellowhammers were once everywhere but now there are just 2-3 pairs on Loxley Common and Redstarts are diminishing. Songbirds that were once common are now scarce such as Chaffinch, Greenfinch, Skylark, Linnets and Flycatchers. Meadow Pipits are gone – the favoured nests used by the Cuckoo. Species that are on the increase or new to the area are Buzzards, Peregrine Falcon, Red Kite, and Parakeet. Water birds are doing well including the flamboyant Mandarin. Pigeons and Crows are on the increase.

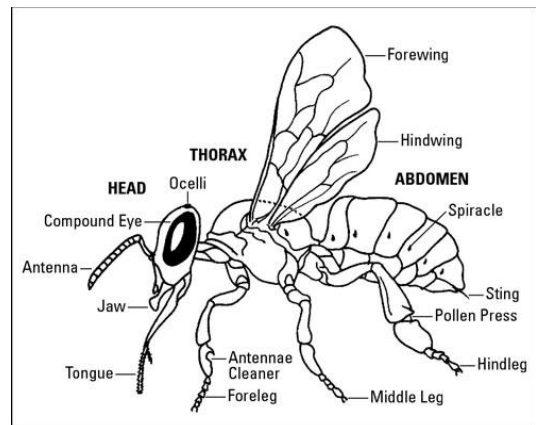
Dave ended his very interesting and informative talk with a few 'Gosney's guidelines'. Keep open areas open. Keep wet areas wet. Keep dogs at bay and keep humans at bay. Create clearings in woods. Have a pond. Do not use pesticides and stop eradicating falcons.

Joan Buckland

## Open Meeting January 16, 2025

*Bees, Ants and Wasps, by Graham Appleby.* Having been arranged for 2024 and cancelled due to snow, then postponed this year due to snow, Graham was quite relieved to talk to us. Graham became a beekeeper in 2010, and had always had an interest in insects, although as a child he had been warned about avoiding bees, ants and wasps that might sting you.

Graham's talk took us from the creation of earth, through the emergence of life and eventually the first insects 400 million years ago, confirmed by fossil remains. Insects comprise 80% life on earth. These evolved into different groups. *Bees, wasps* and *ants* all form part of the insect order Hymenoptera, a large and diverse group made up of 'membrane-winged' insects found on every continent except Antarctica. Most are social animals, with colonies made up of queens, drones and workers, although there are some solitary species. Bees and wasps are important pollinators.



There are about 250 species of bee in the UK: 225 are solitary bees, 24 bumble bees (of which 6 are cuckoo bumble bees) and 1 honey bee. Honey bees are kept in hives and we learnt details of their anatomy and life cycle.

A queen bee will live 3-5 years and can lay up to 2000 eggs a day. Female workers look after the brood, living only 35 days. They do not fly under 10° C and will keep the brood warm over winter.

Graham also talked about Wasps, which are omnivorous and are important as they keep other species under control. Their nests only last a year, and the queens hibernate and start a new colony each year. Ants live socially in colonies and there are 80 species in the UK. Queen ants lay 800 eggs a day and are long-lived.

Graham finished his talk with a warning about Asian Hornets which can reach the UK and should be reported as they can destroy beehives.

Christine Roe

## RSPB Local Group bird walk around Lodge Moor, 13 November 2024

Report by John Robinson. Leader: Sue Shaw. 46 people attended; 23 bird species identified

Lodge Moor was bathed in lovely warm autumn sunshine for our November bird walk, which was probably reflected in the unusually large number of people attending it. Led by Sue Shaw, we had our youngest birdwatcher ever with 9-month-old Micah and his mother, both very keen to see birds. On entering the woods that had been a WW2 prison camp, the only birdlife appeared to be Dunnocks, Robins and Wrens, but things soon improved with the appearance of a lovely Treecreeper and Coal Tits. High in the tree canopy we discovered flocks of feeding Goldfinches and Siskins, but craning our necks to see them wasn't easy.



Treecreeper Photo: Steve Martin



Coal Tit Photo: William Bennet

Once out of the woodland, we saw a small flock of Redwings, along with a Pied Wagtail on a barn roof.



Pied Wagtail Photo: William Bennet

On reaching the top of Wyming Brook we proceeded along the precipitous footpath that clings to the valley side overlooking Rivelin Dams. We managed to see a Grey Heron by the water and a colourful Jay in the woodland before climbing back up to Lodge Moor. It was a terrific walk; and with the sun shining on the showy colourful autumn leaves, simply stunning.

### Star bird: Siskin

23 Species were identified: Blackbird, Black-headed Gull, Blue Tit, Chaffinch, Coal Tit, Crow, Dunnock, Goldcrest, Goldfinch, Great Tit, Grey Heron, Herring Gull, Jay, Magpie, Mallard, Nuthatch, Pied Wagtail, Redwing, Robin, Siskin, Treecreeper, Wood Pigeon, Wren

*Reproduced by permission of John Robinson*

### Rivers Trust – new sewage map

If you want to check out the local sewer overflows, you can use The Rivers Trust website. They have recently added a “**near real-time alerts**” tab to their Sewage Map, so that it now shows whether Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs) are currently discharging or not. These data are from the English water companies near real-time Event Discharge Monitoring (EDM) discharge alerts, pulled together into one map. However, the data comes directly from the EDMs, so discharges have not been verified.

<https://theriverstrust.org/sewage-map>

The four combined sewer overflows to look for in the Rivelin catchment are: YWS00002 on the Blackbrook, just below Redmires Road at Lodge Moor; YWS01534 on the Stannington side of the river, just upstream of Glen Bridge; YWS01172 beside Holme Head weir and YWS00804 just across the Stannington Road from Lidl at Malin Bridge.

Sue Shaw

## Forthcoming Open Meetings

The final two talks for the 2024–2025 season have a river theme.

Firstly, on **Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> February 2025**, we welcome **Jan Hobot**, Head Riverkeeper at the Haddon Estate near Bakewell, who will talk about "**Haddon Estate: fish, wildlife and conservation – a sustainable future**". Come and listen to how radical changes were made in river management practices on the four Rivers of the Haddon Estate (the Derwent, Wye, Lathkill and Bradford). They moved from heavily stocking the rivers with fish to no stocking at all, instead managing them for their natural flora and fauna, while still providing fishing opportunities, including wild trout. A talk about fish, wildlife, conservation and where we are in the present day, as well as plans to achieve a sustainable future for the Haddon Estate."

And secondly, on **Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> March 2025**, the topic of the talk by **Jacqueline Diaz Nieto** – local River Ranger and river activist (and RVCG secretary until recently) – is "**Rivelin River Health: the good, the bad and the ugly**". Not a day seems to go by when river health, pollution to waters and strange discharges going into rivers isn't mentioned on the news or on social media. From Windermere to the River Wye, we're always hearing about the poor state of river health up and down the country. Partly in response to this, a group of interested local individuals, brought together by a long-standing community river champion, John Blewitt, started monitoring the river health of the Rivelin (and Loxley) and reporting any issues spotted on the river. Jacqueline will be talking about the invertebrates that are used as river health indicators, as well as some of the issues found and reported. Come and hear about their findings so far. And more importantly, come and find out how you can get involved in monitoring or reporting either on the Rivelin or another river – the more eyes and ears on the rivers the better.

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 the interesting talks, updates on what's happening in the valley and an opportunity to chat over refreshments afterwards.

Sue Shaw

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

## THE RECORDER – WINTER 2024/25

Can you believe it is 2025 – where does the time go? It seems to fly by, but maybe that is because it takes me longer to do things these days! We will never have the auspicious date 24.12.24 again – I like symmetry.

It has been another record-breaking hot year worldwide, although it may not have seemed like it here. The weather systems are becoming more unpredictable. The Jet Stream has become more erratic, and the ocean currents are changing. At the time of writing there are catastrophic wildfires in USA and there have been more floods here and in Australia. Smoke from fires in Siberia and North America has deposited soot over the Arctic. What will the year ahead bring? I am an optimistic person, but I am very worried. It is up to all of us to do what we can to help by being as nature friendly as possible. Grow flowers that are attractive to insects; do not be too tidy in the flower borders (who wants to see bare soil?) and do not use any pesticides. Put up a bird box – not facing south which would be too hot for the chicks. Make sure there is clean drinking water available. Have a few bird feeders preferably near a hedge or bush so birds can dive into these if danger arises. It is advised by the RSPB to clean the feeders every week to stop the spread of the endoparasite disease Trichomonosis, which has devastated the Greenfinch population. If you have not got a pond, dig a hole for an old washing up bowl or similar small container. Add a few stones to enable creatures to get out and a water plant for protection. You will be surprised how soon frogs or newts will find the pond, especially if a neighbour has one. The amphibians will gobble up many slugs. Does it really matter if a few leaves are nibbled? It just shows you have a wildlife friendly garden, and, after all, we are not entering for Chelsea.



What plants did you see in flower on Christmas Day? I have noted this for a few years now and it is interesting to see any differences. This year I saw *Osteospermum*,



Everlasting Wallflowers, Periwinkle, Bergenia, Ox-eye Daisy, Dandelion, Trailing Campanula, Wild Primroses, Wild Strawberries, Rose and Winter Jasmine. The Fuchsia and Marigold which were in flower last year were killed by the cold weather at the beginning of December. Can you add to this list? The wet, windy weather has caused damage down the valley and the beautiful Weeping Willow tree near the café has been blown down. We are hoping to replace it with another Willow and not an Amber Gold, which seems to be the 'go to' tree these days. With the demise of the Ash trees the British countryside is going to look very different. There is a rumour going round that the lovely old Ash tree, that our Crosspool Tawny Owl lived in, is earmarked for being felled. Even though no-one has seen the Owl in the tree there are still Owls around. There was one in my apple tree on 12<sup>th</sup> January, which is not that far from the Ash tree. It is an ideal nesting place and may be used again for breeding. I looked at the tree in the summer and it looked very healthy. Old trees like this one may have some resistance to the Ash Dieback disease.

The snow arrived on 5<sup>th</sup> January and there were still a few piles, where people had cleared their drives, on 17<sup>th</sup> January, despite the sunny weather. When the snow disappeared from the garden, I noticed a bright white patch with what looked like cobwebs covered in dew round it. At first I thought it was paint as we had had the decorators in that week, but they did not use any white paint.



I sent a photo to my son in Sweden who said it was 'Snow Mould', which they are very familiar with having lots of snow for several months. This is the first time I have seen it and had not heard of it before. It develops under prolonged snow cover. It feeds on grasses and can leave a brown mark on lawns that lasts until May or June. There are two possibilities – *Microdochium nivale* which is pinkish/white or

*Typhula incarnata*, which is greyish/white. Has anyone else seen something similar?

Where have all the winter Thrushes gone? I was delighted to see a Field Fare eating the windfall apples in the garden on 12<sup>th</sup> January. This is the only one I have seen. It joined the seven Blackbirds, some of which will be migrants. There was a bit of scrapping going on when one infringed another's space, despite a plentiful supply of apples and nibbles. Derek Hastings also had one Fieldfare in his garden for a few days.

We are now halfway through Winter, and things can only get better (where have I heard that before?). The children enjoyed sledging for a few days and actually played outside. On 14<sup>th</sup> January it was quite mild, and the birds were singing as if it was Spring. A bit premature, I think! Not too early to plan your garden though. We will need borders full of bright flowers to cheer us up and get us through the coming year together with some warm, sunny days.

Thank you for your sightings: -

Mark Bateman S6 – 5.11.24 – Kingfisher – Hind Wheel; Pair of Dippers near café; 30.12.24 – Dipper in river near Plonk Wheel; Kingfisher near Holme Head Wheel.

Jack Nuttgens S6 – 26.11.24 - On his walk down the valley saw a Grey Wagtail, Buzzard; Blue Tit, 2 Long-tailed Tits, 2 Magpies, Jay, Robin, Wren and 2 Great Tits; 30.12.24 – Dipper above Swallow Wheel; Grey Wagtail near sculpture chair; Kingfisher flew under bridge near café and Buzzard circling over.

Chris Roe S10 – 14.11.24 - Jay, Wren, Robin and about 20 Long-tailed Tits in garden; 12.1.25 - Sparrowhawk spent 30 minutes under a corkscrew hazel bush removing feathers, dismembering and devouring a blackbird. When it had finished it spent a couple of minutes cleaning itself and flew off to perch in a birch tree in the sun. Christine was obviously fascinated by this activity and inspected the kill site where she found a pile of black feathers and blood stain. The Hawk must have been very hungry.

Paul Thompson S6 – 6.1.25 – in garden – Male Chaffinch. Paul says he used to see them regularly but has not seen one for many years. 8.1.25 – Paul excited to see a Reed Bunting for the first time in 49 years. Note – Anyone else seen a Greenfinch, Chaffinch or Bullfinch in the garden? I used to get them regularly but no longer.

Sue Shaw S10 – 16.1.25 – first wasp of the season appeared in the house. – It needs to go back to sleep for a little while yet.

Joan Buckland S10 – In garden – 1.12.24 – 2 Robins, 2 Wrens; 10.1.25 – Song Thrush; 16.12.24 and 12.1.25 – Female Tawny Owl.

Joan Buckland 18.1.25

## Walking in the footsteps of my ancestors in Rivelin Valley

I started researching my family tree over 25 years ago after my brother had collected a large amount of information as part of an extracurricular university project,

By the time the Internet came along and Ancestry had trees online I'd confirmed all the direct branches back 5 generations to the early 1800s, so 32 branches. My mother's maiden name was Gregory, and her paternal branch was traced back to a John Gregory born 1811 in Bradfield or Sheffield depending on which census return one looked at. His trade was an engineer in 1841, the earliest available census, when living in Rawmarsh, Rotherham and in 1851 and 1861, then living in Kidderminster, an engineer at a carpet factory. His first wife died in 1847, aged 39 in Kidderminster and he remarried just over a year later in 1848. The marriage certificate showed his father as John Gregory, a labourer. With that, there was no progress for almost 10 years. John Gregory in Sheffield is not uncommon!

After my daughter started at Sheffield University, I moved to Sheffield. I picked up where I had left off, now with even more Internet records. I came across the Bradfield Archives and a record in the Indentures book dated 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1819 read

*"John Gregory, by apprentice with Mr Armitage of Mousehole Forge and hath not done any acts or deed to gain a settlement different to that in Bradfield. "... has a wife and 4 children. John 7, Eliza, William and one not baptized"*

John being 7 in 1819 closely matched my known John shown on censuses, born 1811. Ann was born 1819 so not being baptized matched too.

After reading dozens of other texts including a Gregory, I found a further entry from 11<sup>th</sup> November 1831 which read:

*"Sarah the wife of John Gregory of Sheffield Park (near the sign of the Haigh Tree), says she believes he was bound apprentice to John Gregory his father and that he lived all the time in the house next to Geo. Armitage on Stannington via the Water near Malin Bridge - is by trade a puddler - 2 Children Wm. aged 17 Ann aged 13. She says her husband left her on Monday to go about the country seeking work.*

With this information I had a complete family and a timeline in 3 generations.

## Putting it all together:

John Sr. was born in Wadsley in abt. 1782 and he married Sarah, born abt. 1777 in 1810. They had 4 children John, Eliza, William and Ann (Hannah) all born either Wadsley or Wadsley Bridge. He was a puddler by trade and apprenticed at Mousehole Forge under George Armitage or his father, also a John Gregory. By 1819, when John was 37, they were mentioned in the Indentures (*Indentures are legal documents that bound children to masters or mistresses in parish records from the 1800s*). I'm not sure of the reason for the entry. In 1831 John Sr. has gone looking for work leaving the wife and children in need of support. My guess is that he went in the direction of Ironville as in the 1830s, John Jr. is living nearby at Codnor Park. In 1841 he is living there and is still there in 1851. John Sr. died in 1855 aged 73 and Sarah in 1863 aged 86. John Jr. moved first to Rawmarsh and then Kidderminster where my mother was born a couple of generations later.

With John Sr. linked to Mousehole Forge I used the Ancestry genealogy web site to search for any other Gregorys linked to Mousehole and to my absolute surprise found a Sophia Gregory, dau. of John Gregory of Mousehole Forge who died aged 1 in 1796 then Alice who died 1793, dau. of Jonathan Gregory of Mousehole Forge. Census returns threw up a 74-year-old Robert Gregory in 1871 born in Mousehole, Yorkshire matched to a baptism 24 Sep 1797 to John and Ann showing John as a Forgerman. Finally looking for any other children baptized to John Gregory, a Forgerman and Ann gave a family with 13 children with John Sr. as the first born in 1782 to the last child in 1801. I'd estimate John Sr's father was born about 1758.

Before finding out any of this I had, unbeknown to me, walked, and run, in my ancestors' footsteps as I often walk and run along the Rivelin. I now imagine both John Sr. and John Jr. walking to work at Mousehole each time I run past. My hope would be to find out where in Wadsley the generations grew up but for now Rivelin Valley is where my genetic blood, sweat and maybe tears are from.

Andy Hyde