

# Newsletter

Promoting and protecting heritage and wildlife



## Autumn 2025 no 134



Photo: Roger Kite

### From the Chair

The autumn season is well under way with the leaf colours in the valley looking quite beautiful.

The committee, as always, have been very busy, whilst I have missed the October open meeting and will be away for the November meeting too. I will be very sorry to miss that one as Chet Cunago's efforts with Swifts in our area are truly appreciated. I personally have not had too many sightings in the valley this year.

Going forward, the committee will have an additional meeting to flesh out the management plan for the valley which I am very keen to complete, and yet another additional meeting to review updates required for a new edition of *Walking the Rivelin*.

Mapping boundaries and ownership along the river, whether it be Sheffield Council or private owners, continues to engage Roger and Sue in particular, so that we can move forward with our proposal for Local Nature Reserve status. We have been told, of course, that the Council has no funds available this financial year to progress this.

There are currently notices up in various places along the valley informing us that Exolum will commence essential pipeline work to the east of Rails Road on October 27<sup>th</sup>. I suspect that will be quite extensive and messy work. Fortunately, I doubt few of us would be planning a picnic in that area at this time of the

### Contacts

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Task Team	Graham Appleby
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year and it should all be restored to its original state on completion. Money has been set aside for replacement trees if any are removed in the process. In fact, the fallen willow tree in Rivelin Park is being replaced by one such tree and we will get that planted very shortly.

On the subject of mess, many members have reported a major incident along the river which seemed to have happened around Sunday October 19<sup>th</sup>. The entire river from Rails Road down to Hind Wheel at least was affected and looked horribly brown. The Environment Agency (EA) have been contacted by several people including myself. Initial reports indicated it was from a burst water main, but it is difficult to understand how that would cause such extensive silting into the river. I have asked EA to explain and to assess the environmental impact of the incident on the wildlife including fish and invertebrates. Let's hope there was not any sewage or nasty chemical content but it's yet another worry about our waterways.

On the planning front, the proposal for a dog park next to Hollins Lane is still pending. Local objections have ensured that tree preservation orders have been made for the site. Permission has been granted for the erection of an agricultural building on Hopwood Lane. Certainly the dry stone walling that has been completed in that area look very good. I

suspect however that I won't like the building, because the view across the valley is so good at the end of Coppice Lane.

Same Hill Farm has been the major concern to members, and we lodged an enforcement complaint which should have resulted in all work stopping. It's unclear whether the Council have actually done an assessment yet and various complaints have been put in about contravention of public rights of way on adjacent land. [See more in the Planning Update on page 7.]

Moving on to more positive news, following our meeting with Matt Duffy from the Don Catchment Rivers Trust, about fish passage along the Rivelin and the proposal to get all weirs removed Yorkshire-wide in the future, there have been a number of meetings of stakeholders. The Great Yorkshire Rivers Partnership aims to address barriers to fish migration in Yorkshire rivers to help restore natural river processes, improve water quality and promote biodiversity to create better blue spaces for both nature and people. Of course waterway heritage is very relevant for the Rivelin Valley, and we don't want to lose all that historical appeal. Both Joined up Heritage and the Sheffield Waterways Strategy Group are forums where we hope the discussion will be balanced by our views on preservation of our centuries-old heritage.

Very recently Joan Buckland and I have had a meeting with a young representative from the Wildlife Recovery Trust. This charitable group have had phenomenal success in East Anglia eradicating Mink and making massive improvements in biodiversity. They now have ambitions to expand that good work into other areas, South Yorkshire being one of them. Whilst we don't have many reports of Mink in the valley the proposal is to lay traps which have a lure which is incredibly powerful and able to attract Mink from as far away as 2 miles. We suggested that approval will be required from the Ecology department at the Council. If approved traps will be sited in safe places where there is minimal disturbance from animals or people. I will keep you updated.

In the meantime, enjoy the rest of Autumn and let's hope we don't have any more storms like Babet in the coming weeks.

Neil Porter

### **Walkley Heritage Open Days Event**

On 20<sup>th</sup> September we joined our friends in Walkley with a display of maps and photographs about some of the important buildings, including Mousehole Forge and the Grade 2 listed bridges in the Rivelin Valley.



Photo: Sue Shaw

Luckily we were in the Community Centre on Fir Street as the rain was very heavy. Visitor numbers were affected by the weather, but those who braved it enjoyed our efforts, and we enjoyed talking to them. Joan, Eileen and Rachel entertained the children, helping them applying stencils to bird and insect homes, making caddis fly cases and dragonflies.

With refreshments on site, including delicious cakes, we had a very good afternoon.

Christine Roe

### **Open Meeting September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2025 The Amazing World of Plants**

If you did not go to the talk by Gerry Firkins, you missed a treat. Gerry, thankfully, stepped in at very short notice as Peter Machan was not well. Gerry thinks that plants get short shrift compared to animals in documentaries and proceeded to explain why in a well delivered, entertaining and informative talk.

There are hundreds of thousands of species of plant, and counting, in the world. In the UK there are about 5,000 in the wild, including garden escapes. Seeds can lay dormant for many years. Date Palm seeds found in an archaeological dig in Herod's Palace were planted and grew and flowered some 2,000 years after they were buried. Some seeds need a frosty period before germinating. Plants have different ways of attracting their desired pollinators. The flowers of some plants open at different times of day depending on which pollinators they wish to attract. Evening Primrose flowers release their perfume in the evening to attract moths. The huge flower of a Sunflower is actually made up of 2,000 flowers, and it follows the sun to advertise to pollinators. Many plants are poisonous including Wood Anemone, Lesser Celandine, Aquilegia and Foxglove. When some plants are being attacked by insects, they can change their chemical signature to deter further feeding and also send a signal to nearby plants alerting them. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century the Swedish naturalist Carl von Linne standardized the names of plants and animals, a system which is still used today.

If you do not already talk to your plants, try a little encouragement – they may be listening.

Joan Buckland

## Open Meeting October 9<sup>th</sup>, 2025 Ughill: Building a Climate Resistant Upland Farm



Tom Dunne works for the Sheffield and Rotherham Wildlife Trust (SRWT) which purchased 326 acres of land at Ughill in Jan 2024. Tom's own speciality is more to do with sheep identification and he is now part of a team thinking outside the more traditional farming box as climate change forces changes in farming methods. SRWT own the land outright having taken the bold step of bidding for the land, and then crowd funding provided sufficient funds well within the 12-month deadline period.

The previous farmer was struggling to make any money out of the land using traditional farming methods. Farming in the uplands is challenging due to the exposure to wind, sun and rain and growing seasons are reduced by some two months compared to lowland farming. The land has been split with one half dedicated to wildlife and the other half to become a viable farm that pays its way.

As part of the 'Nature Recovery project', they are focussing on improving the numbers of snipe, lapwing and curlew whose numbers have been decimated. This involves interrupting land drains to increase surface water and keeping livestock away from nesting grounds. They have already had early success with lapwing breeding. Heather is a difficult plant to remove so they have planted an extra 6,200 trees across 7 acres which will shade out the heather and the grass will return. The trees will also give shelter to livestock eating the grass below. Trees make up around 20% of the land. 1.3km of fencing has also been installed to allow new areas to be grazed. The upland grassland does not give the best yield and they are careful not to overgraze and to use the right animal for the land. This is currently the Aberdeen

Angus/Dexter cross which is a smaller framed cow and more suited to the upland farm. The lessons learned from this experimental farm will be rolled out to other farms to help them remain sustainable in the face of dramatic climate challenges.

Graham Appleby

### November Open Meeting



The swifts have left us but you can find out all about attracting them in the future at our next Open Meeting on Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> November at Stephen Hill Methodist Church at 7.30pm.

*Photo: BTO*

### Holly Hagg Community Farm on TV



Holly Hagg (and Sheffield) got a good showing recently on the Channel 5 programme *Yorkshire Great & Small with Dan & Helen*.

If you missed it, it's well worth watching on My5 (or Freeview Catch-Up): it is Series 2, Episode 6.

### Mary Brazil

We are very sorry to report the passing of Mary Brazil in September. She and her husband Frank were original members of RVCG.

Mary was an active member of the original Working Party that soon became the Executive Committee way back in 1991, and she continued to support the early aspirations and later achievements of the Group. A tireless worker, mostly behind the scenes, she helped to maintain the steady growth of the Group, helping to run events and visits bolstering the enthusiasm for community involvement in shaping our plans for the valley and how we can all make a difference.

Mary paid for the original bench on the embankment at Frank Wheel in memory her husband and she would visit the spot regularly with family – an ideal spot for reflections. She will be sadly missed by family and friends, especially those around Den Bank.

Roger Kite

## Task Team

### **RVCG Task Team Management Vacancies**

The task team is a major asset of the Rivelin Valley Conservation Group and fondly supported by the membership and local Council. The RVCG began its life as a task team back in 1991 and has evolved into a key contributor to the upkeep of the Rivelin Nature Trail. With a list of over 80 volunteer members, we remain one of the strongest and most popular task teams in the area. However, the small group of team members who managed the task team over the years have slowly dispersed due to retirement, ill health etc, and I have become a bit of a lone wolf which is putting the future of the task team in peril. As I age, my health is becoming less reliable, and my circumstances have changed as I am often touring the country with my little caravan at every given opportunity. Although I have a handful of volunteers willing to 'help' with task day logistics, I would like a small group of us to become a management team, identifying and prioritising jobs and helping plan and organise events. Hopefully we can achieve a flexible management team who can cover for each other to help maintain the regular monthly events and help secure the future of the RVCG Task Team. If you would like more information, please contact me:

Graham Appleby 07850712988

Email: [taskteam@btinternet.com](mailto:taskteam@btinternet.com)

### **First Aid Vacancy**

On a similar note, Graham Axelby and Scott Berg have been RVCG volunteer first aiders for a few years now but Graham would like to retire from the role having been exemplary in his contribution for which I am enormously grateful. Wielding sharp tools in an often, cold, damp valley can be a risky business, and I would like at least one first aider to attend every event. Therefore, I am looking for a volunteer first aider who is either already trained or the RVCG will pay for the necessary training. Please contact me if you would like more information.

### **July Task Day**

The June task day had been cancelled due to a clash with the Crosspool Festival which was well documented in the last newsletter and unfortunately an alternative date was not possible. The July task day did go ahead however which was a return to the site of Rivelin Corn Mill probably better known as Rails Road car park. The main task was to give the willow tunnel a haircut and to plant the offcuts which are then woven in to help strengthen the structure.



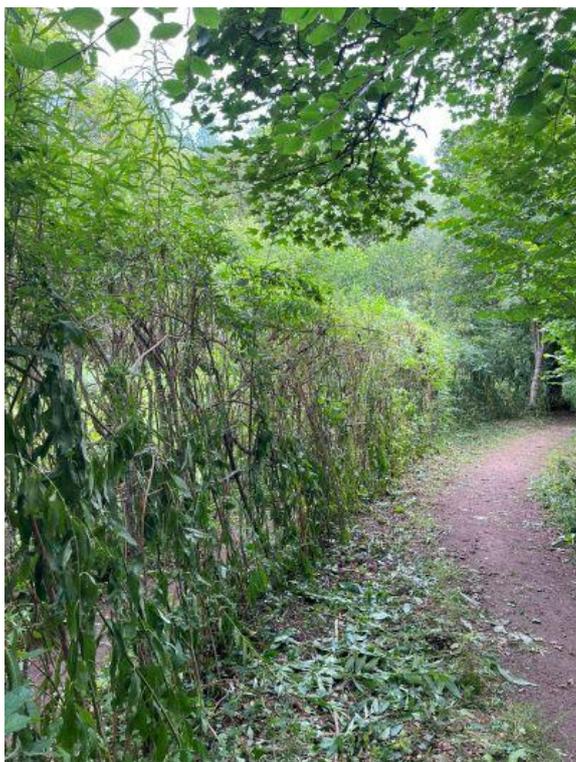
*Task Team Volunteers on the willow tunnel planting and weaving in the willow whips*



*Gareth utilising a painting platform to help reach the roof of the willow tunnel safely*

The tunnel has been a looking a little unkempt of late with some areas struggling to grow in the shade of much larger trees. However, the dead and dying willow still provides a framework for the tunnel and gives support to the newly planted saplings. The transformation was amazing after the hard work of the task team volunteers. The willow tunnel is still very attractive especially to passing children as there

is a well-trodden path through it. Originally installed in 2007, the willow tunnel remains one of the RVCG's favourite assets and is maintained by the task team just twice a year.



*The Rivelin Corn Mill Willow Tunnel after its haircut*

Other tasks were also carried out to improve the area such as Balsam pulling, litter picking, cutting back the undergrowth, cleaning the benches and interpretation boards.



*Regular volunteer Hilary dwarfed by the balsam*

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



*Volunteer Scott fixing the fence*

Sadly, the wooden dipping platform is dangerously decayed, and plans are afoot to replace it using recycled plastic. However, some quotations have been quite expensive, and we are looking for the most cost-effective solution and financial support. If anyone has any ideas for the replacement of the dipping platform then please contact me.



*A few task team volunteers proudly admiring their handywork.*

Graham Appleby, Task Team Leader

### Wyming Brook stepping stones

The stepping stones at Wyming Brook have been replaced by Sheffield City Council following storm damage. The design has caused some controversy – some approve while others think they are an eyesore! They have been designed to stand up to future bad weather/flood events and will 'weather in' to the surroundings with time.

Sue Shaw



Photo: Rachel Wileman

### New wildlife waymarkers at Redmires

Sheffield and Rotherham Wildlife Trust staff and volunteers have installed new waymarkers at Redmires Reservoirs. The artwork was created by Sheffield-based artist Luke Horton, whose distinctive style can also be seen on Sheffield's bins. Each waymarker highlights one of four key species found at Redmires – water vole, curlew, golden plover and oyster catcher – with the aim of reminding visitors to stick to paths and keep dogs on leads, especially in sensitive areas. This project was made possible through a partnership with Yorkshire Water.

Sue Shaw



(Based on SRWT newsletter)

## Rivelin Park Information Board

The existing 'Welcome to the Rivelin Valley' information board outside Rivelin Café, has been given a new lease of life. Covered in green mould and with half its framework missing, the information board was in a very sorry state. However, RVCG task team member, Roger Cose, commented that he could replace the frame. And so. I left it with him and over a period of weeks he kept me informed of progress. Roger purchased some oak pieces from which he made the frame using strong gorilla glue and dowelled corners. He then gave it five coats of Danish oil which should last for many years. Well done Roger and Thank you.



Roger Cose with his handmade oak frame  
Graham Appleby

## New Sheffield dog walking code

A new code of conduct and a voluntary registration scheme for dog walkers have been approved by Sheffield City Council, to promote responsible use of the city's parks and green spaces. Sheffield has an estimated 62,000 dogs, and a new campaign will encourage owners to pick up waste and keep pets away from sensitive wildlife areas. Professional walkers will be invited to join a £120-a-year registration scheme, limited to walking no more than six dogs at a time, with approved businesses listed on the council's parks website.

<https://democracy.sheffield.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?AIIId=37937>

<https://democracy.sheffield.gov.uk/documents/s79335/>

## THE RECORDER - AUTUMN 2025

Autumn has officially arrived but, unofficially, signs appeared in September. The seed cases and leaves of the Lime trees on Manchester Road fell early and I enjoyed crunching them along the path next to the road. The Spring and Summer were dry and hot with many records being broken. We have had some rain since, and 4<sup>th</sup> October brought Storm Amy which was very wet and windy but not enough to refill the reservoirs. Drought rules still apply and the use of hosepipes for watering the garden is banned. To-day, 12<sup>th</sup> October, is a lovely day and the trees look beautiful in their autumn colours.

There is a glut of fruit this year. Gardeners are leaving boxes of apples near their gates for people to help themselves. Raspberries and black currants also had a good year. Hawthorn and Rowan trees are laden with berries which is good news for the migrant birds winging their way here this month. Oak and Beech trees are covered in nuts. This is called a 'mast year' so look out for Bramblings under Beech trees. The vegetable garden was prolific with little damage from slugs and snails due to the weather. Snails in my garden went into aestivation which I have only seen in the south of France before. They seal themselves in to prevent drying out. Creatures that preferred damp conditions such as amphibians had a hard time, so having a pond in your garden will help them survive. This year I have put 29 froglets out from the spawn I collected so, hopefully, some of them will survive to eat the slugs next year. The dry conditions suited sawflies and they stripped the leaves of the gooseberries and some rose bushes.



*Eristalis tenax*

I am particularly fond of hoverflies. When I have my lunch in the garden one or two come to investigate me. One even landed on my finger when I offered it a meal of diluted honey. I think they have territories as one that hovered regularly over the rockery chased others off.

Some hoverflies lay their eggs in water such as the hoverfly (*Eristalis horticola*) and the Drone-fly (*Eristalis tenax*). The larvae are called rat-tailed maggots and are bizarre creatures. They have a body like a maggot with a protuberance at the tail end like a periscope which pierces the water surface and enables the creature to breath. How weird is that? Nature is amazing.



Rat-tailed maggot

Shield Bugs are around now. You will most likely see them basking in the sun on brambles or hawthorn leaves, before they hibernate. The more common ones are the Hawthorn Shield Bug (*Acanthosoma haemorrhoidalis*) and the Common Green Shield Bug (*Palomena prasina*). Ladybirds also hibernate over the winter, and several are climbing round my windows looking for a safe crevice to hide in. You may have noticed more spiders lately. This is because the males are looking for females.

The wasps and late flying insects are feasting on the ivy flowers, and the birds, especially Blackbirds, will gobble up the berries later. I saw and heard a noisy flock of geese (probably Pink-footed) flying very high on the

morning of 23<sup>rd</sup> September so keep an eye open for more. Waxwings, Redwings and Fieldfares will also be close behind. Let me know if you spot them.

There have been more butterflies this year thanks to the lovely weather, but numbers are still in decline. I have noted mainly Small and Large White, Gatekeeper, Speckled Wood, Holly Blue and the occasional Red Admiral and Peacock. If you can add to this list, please let me know. Numbers of moths have fluctuated but overall been good especially Grass Moths. This is probably because we did not cut the lawn until the middle of August. This shows that if the habitat is there the creatures will come. Moths we have trapped lately include Large Yellow Underwing, Angle Shades, Red-Green Carpet, Square Spot Rustic and Box Moth.

Recently I spotted a sparrow going into the nest box. I thought it was too late to have young. It seems that Sparrows and Starlings clear out their boxes (info. RSPB) maybe with a view to shelter in over winter.

The nights are drawing in and getting colder. Leave some leaves in the borders for little creatures to hibernate in in the winter, and look forward to seeing more birds on your feeders.

Thank you for your sightings:-

Gillian Drinkwater S10 – 23.9.25 – Flock of about 40 noisy geese flying high going north (probably Pink-footed).

Sue Shaw S10 – pleased to see a Pied Wagtail visiting her new pond.

Roger Kite S10 – 20.9.25 -Male Blackcap in garden.

Joan Buckland S10 – first Jay in garden this season on 3.10.25; 21.9.25 - 2 Buzzards circling over valley; 17.8.25 – female Sparrow Hawk in garden.

Joan Buckland 12.10.25

## Merry Christmas from the Rivelin Valley Conservation Group

