



Spring 2020

NEWSLETTER of the Medlock & Tame Valley Conservation Association

“Everything is blooming most recklessly; if it were voices instead of colours, there would be an unbelievable shrieking into the heart of the night”.

Rainer Maria Rilke



Welcome to our first newsletter of 2020. Spring has been well and truly heralded in the woodland garden of 5 Oaken Clough Terrace. Signs of life can be seen in so many places amid the gloom that surrounds us despite the grip of Corona Virus (Covid-19) in the world. The birds are still singing their dawn chorus and nature continues to unfold. Sadly, we will not be able to enjoy the grounds of Burlinson House as a full team this summer in light of current restrictions, but we look forward to returning hopefully in late Autumn, early Winter.

In the meantime, stay safe and well and enjoy what you can of the Spring and Summer months.

Meanderings in the Medlock Valley (A trip down memory lane)

This is a pictorial jaunt down the Medlock Valley from photographs I took over twenty years ago. Some features are the same today but many have disappeared forever. This green corridor between Oldham and Ashton is always under constant threat from encroaching urbanisation.

Bryan Stringer



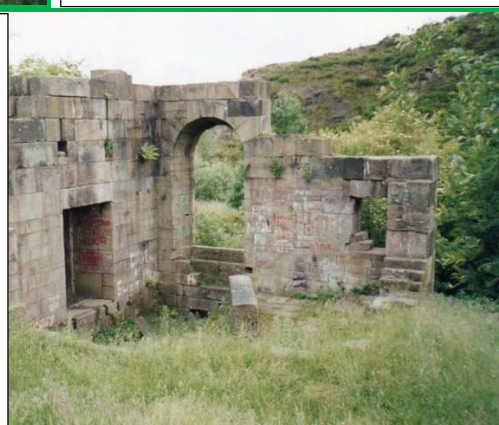
On the left is the sewage outfall from the underground chamber at the former Abbeyhills Sewage Works. On the right is the culverted River Medlock under Abbeyhills Road. (28/06/98)

An old iron post and fence near Alder's Farm, Alt Lane. (28/06/98)



The Rocher Valley waterfall. This weir was constructed to provide cooling water for Park Bridge Ironworks. A sluice ran to the right along the bank and discharged into a wooden trough which crossed the river to feed the Top and Bottom Forges (28/06/98)

The remains of the engine house at the Rocher Mine, Park Bridge. A narrow gauge railway carried the coal to the Fairbottom Branch Canal at Fennyfield Bridge. (28/06/98)





The former Post Office on Mill Brow at Park Bridge. At the time this photograph was taken the building was unoccupied. Behind is the roof of the Bottom Forge. (01/01/99)



The chimney at Fairbottom all that remained of Newcomen's engine (known as Fairbottom Bobs) which pumped water from the Cannel Mine into the river (28/06/98)



The remains of the chimney after being demolished. This “official” vandalism was carried out sometime between June, 1998 and March, 1999, the last recognisable edifice to disappear from a historical, industrial site. (28/03/99)



Crime Lane passing under the Hollinwood Branch Canal between Sammy's Basin and Crime Lake. The roadway is awash after heavy Autumn rains. (18/10/98)



“The Boodle” looking west. This footpath runs from the end of Tree House Avenue in Waterloo to Daisy Nook along the top of Boodle Wood to the right of the picture. (30/05/99)

The iron footbridge over the Hollinwood Branch Canal near Sammy’s Basin. This bridge connected Pinch Farm (on right behind the trees) to Crime Lane. It was demolished as an act of “official” vandalism by Oldham MBC in 2016. (18/07/98)



The new bridge over the Medlock at Daisy Nook carrying Stannybrook Road from Crime Lake to Newmarket Road. Behind is Daisy Nook Farm. (05/07/98)

Construction of the Manchester Outer Ring Road (M60) at Daisy Nook. The car park of the Garden Centre is to the right. (05/07/98)



MEMBERSHIP

Why not tell a friend, neighbour or family member about MTVCA? An application form is on the website and can be printed and completed, or, just email or telephone one of the committee and ask them to 'sign you up'. Now more than ever, wildlife needs to be protected. With the disappearance of hedgerows and green areas for property development work, we need to secure habitats for local wildlife to protect and provide for future generations, theirs and ours!

WEBSITE



Don't forget about our website!! Lee Borrell is a committee member and our webmaster and he would be glad to hear from you via the mtvca email (mtvca@yahoo.co.uk) with any pictures, articles or comments which could be included on the website. Be sure to have a look and keep up to date with all that is going on! www.medlockandtame.org.uk. There are photographs, articles, news items and up to date information about the MTVCA. Please feel free to submit articles of interest at any time.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS 2020

We did have a very exciting public programme this year but unfortunately, we have had to postpone this in light of current events. However, just as soon as we are able, we will be inviting you to join us at Burlinson House for our evening programmes.

SPRING POEM by Kathryn Worth

Through all the frozen winter
My nose has grown most lonely
For lovely, lovely, coloured smells
That come in springtime only.

The purple smell of lilacs,
The yellow smell that blows
Across the air of meadows
Where bright forsythia grows.

The tall pink smell of peach trees,
The low white smell of clover,
And everywhere the great green smell
Of grass the whole world over.

WORKSHOP UPDATE by Carl Borrell



In the renewable energy workshop we have been working on wind turbines built from recycled parts. The dynamo is provided by a four-phase stepper motor, we bought a job lot of these, on e-bay so we have enough to make three windmills. The blades are made from off cuts of plastic drainage pipe cut on a twist to provide the contour of an aerofoil. The hubs are made from food tins cut into sections.



We have completed one unit which is ready to be deployed, and the plan is to make another two identical units. These will be deployed along the fence in the garden next to the small shed where the weather station is already deployed. The small shed will house the electronics to charge a car battery and the computer hardware to monitor the output. We also have a wind turbine that we bought, which is deployed by the gate and has been in operation for some time. We are planning to relocate this alongside the units we have built.

In this way we will be able to monitor how well the home-made units perform against the commercially available unit. We can also compare the home made units to each other to see if the design performs consistently. Also using data from the weather station we can see how the output varies in different wind conditions. We are hoping that this will demonstrate a repeatable design which will perform favourably with the commercial equivalent for a fraction of the cost .

In the area of energy storage we have been investigating a phenomenon first reported in the mid-nineteenth century in which electricity can be stored in glass. The experiment was reported in a journal in Germany in 1854. Surprisingly the original article was available for download although it had to be translated from the original German. We are attempting to recreate this experiment and should be able to report the results in the forthcoming presentation on batteries.

DID YOU KNOW...?

5 Oaken Clough Terrace is within a Site of Biological Importance (SBI) i.e. Daisy Nook (East). The Greater Manchester Ecology Unit currently classifies Sites of Biological Importance which are described generally as Local Wildlife Sites by the UK Government. A Site of Biological Importance is the name given to the most important non-statutory sites for nature conservation in Manchester and provides a means of protecting sites that are of local interest and importance. SBIs have no legal protection, but do receive some protection through various policies and they must be taken into consideration by the Planning Authority when planning applications affect the site. Sites are selected using a number of attributes that include; habitat type, diversity and rarity of the species present, and the site's naturalness. Our certificate is on display inside the house.

WILDLIFE AROUND THE YEAR

APRIL



With Spring now having arrived, April is a great month to get out and about to see the changes occurring in nature. Blue tits or great tits can easily be spotted with a good pair of binoculars feeding their young with insects in their nests. With young to feed, we should make sure that our birdfeeders and tables are still well topped up for tired parents to partake off and pass on. All this flying back and forth is thirsty work so a clean daily water supply will be appreciated!

April is a good month to consider making a pond. Even a tiny one can attract a variety of wildlife. Toads and frogs are very good for gardens because they eat slugs!

Watch out for the bee fly – a furry insect that resembles a bee, but which has a long straight proboscis held out in front of its body. With its rapidly moving wings it can be seen hovering around nectar-bearing flowers, but also flicking its body groundwards while in flight. This last action indicates that the fly is depositing eggs near the burrows of solitary bees.

Remember to drive carefully and watch for toads as they cross roads to get to their traditional spawning ponds, especially after dark in urban areas.

MAY

May is the greenest month of the year with everything growing very fast. Plants in flower attract wildlife, and bumblebees will eagerly gather the pollen of the geraniums and comfrees. Bees and butterflies also will be attracted by chives. Several plants, especially forget-me-nots and geraniums, may encourage greenfinches and occasionally bullfinches to the garden. Bullfinches also favour apple blossom, while goldfinches may go for dandelion seeds.



If you are out in the evening and hear strange snuffling and grunting noises, it is likely to be hedgehogs courting. This noisy courtship can go on for hours as the pair circle around each other before mating occurs.

Do try to ensure that your garden pond is a safe place for hedgehogs who may approach for a drink but who may then need an escape route if they fall in! A sloping rock or tile or even a log placed diagonally can fulfil this function. Marginal aquatic plants can also be used by hedgehogs to climb out.

Most if not all of us have slugs in our gardens. All good conservationists should try not to use slug pellets but encourage hedgehogs, thrushes, slow-worms, shrews and ground beetles into our gardens as all of these creatures eat slugs.

Dragonfly species such as red damselfly and broad-bodied chaser are now on the wing.

Wildlife-friendly bedding plants such as French marigolds, white or blue petunias, lobelia, poached egg plants, single antirrhinums and heliotrope, will attract insects and can be planted in tubs and borders. You could also try herbs such as mint or thyme, or plants with edible flowers such as nasturtiums, from the garden centre. The month of May also sees Britain's woods as a host for the finest bluebells in the world, a delight to the eye and the nose.



Overhead in towns and cities all around the country the sound of swifts screaming will be heard as they return to their nest sites, many of these in buildings. These birds are only with us for about three months. They appear completely dark in flight (unlike swallows) with no white patches being seen and look larger because of their wider wingspan.

Hérons should be easier to spot at this time of year as they become more courageous and bold now that they have young to provide for.

JUNE

There is activity everywhere and this is a great time to enjoy everything in the garden, the park or on your local walk. Wildflowers such as poppies, cornflowers and wild roses are humming with insects feeding. The first meadow butterflies to appear are meadow brown, ringlet and the small and large skippers.



place.

Roses may suffer from aphids (greenfly and black fly) this month, another good reason to encourage blue tits and great tits to your garden. It has been estimated that a brood of young blue tits may devour up to one million aphids while their parents are feeding them, so this is a very effective way of controlling these insects without chemicals. Try hanging a small feeder of sunflower seeds or a fat ball amongst the roses to encourage the birds to the right

Keep containers of herbs, wildlife-friendly bedding or pots with climbers well watered with saved rainwater if the weather is dry.

Look out for hoverflies which are harmless small stripy insects sometimes confused with wasps. They are actually much smaller than wasps but dart about more quickly as they go from plant to plant collecting pollen. They also eat aphids!

“In the spring, at the end of the day, you should smell like dirt”.
Margaret Atwood

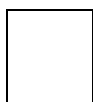
YOUR CONTACT DETAILS

Don't forget to tell us if you have changed your email address or moved house! We don't want to lose touch!

If you would like to request an extra copy of the newsletter by post to give to a family member or friend, then just email or telephone any of the committee.



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HOW YOU CAN HELP MTVCA

1. Become a member!
2. Tell others about MTVCA
3. Donate a gift either a financial donation or something for the garden e.g bird/bat boxes, bird bath, bird feeders or garden equipment
4. Write an article for the website
5. Hold a sponsored event for us e.g. walk, read-in, silence etc.
6. Host a coffee morning in your home!



The home of MTVCA