

Porter Valley News



The newsletter of Friends of the Porter Valley - Registered Charity No. 1069865

Issue 110



July 2023

Putting the Sheaf and Porter back into Sheffield

A talk by Simon Ogden

Wednesday 2nd August

7:30 - 9:30pm

Bents Green Methodist Church

Ringinglow Road



Before the talk we will have our Open Meeting.
After the talk, tea and biscuits, and a chance to chat with the committee
and other members.

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Birds in the Valley

FOPV Bird Surveyors Group report that, of 13 nest boxes checked by them, there was nest material in 12 and eggs or nestlings in 10 – at least 43 nestlings in total, including 30 blue tits and 13 great tits (plus one late clutch of great tits with parent *in situ*). The parent birds have been observed flying to the nests with insects and caterpillars for their hungry young, and leaving with faecal sacs, to maintain a clean nest. Nuthatches were suspected in one, where the box lid was sealed with mud by the parents so that it was not possible to see inside. This is a really encouraging result in the surveyors' first year.

The Surveyors group worked with Caroline, an expert bird ringer from the Sorby Breck Ringing Group. Caroline is also licensed by the British Trust for Ornithology. Eight blue tit nestlings and a feisty adult were ringed. Ringing yields information, indicating not just where migrating birds go in winter but also providing data to measure trends in bird populations, crucial in an era of climate change and habitat loss.

Andrew Darby

Those of us less expert than the FoPV surveyors may be enjoying the Merlin Birdsong App, which we'd never heard of until a fellow walker recommended it in early June. Even Jeremy Clarkson mentioned it in an article recently (never thought of him as a bird fancier). It's delightful to sit quietly in a wood - or the garden - and see which birds are listed as contributing to the background birdsong.

Les and Ann Greenwood

Forge Dam Playground



Come and say hello to our first (albeit small) improvement at Forge Dam Playground! Here is a photo of the Communications Board before installation! No sooner than it was installed, we saw Mossbrook special school and a class from Nether Green come in... praise and interest from teachers and youngsters alike! Clearly worth doing. The Council playgrounds team have really pulled out the stops for us. Friends of the Porter

Valley will fund this new item in this rather tired, but much loved, playground. We have been consulting and thinking about what ideally the playground needs, but are still some way from developing a rejuvenation plan. I'm grateful to members of the Fulwood WI, respondents to last year's consultation, the café team and many many others who have shown interest and offered suggestions.

This playground dates from a time when little thought was given to making things more accessible to children...and for that matter, their parents and grandparents...with particular needs. This Communication Board, like the ones now often in schools, should be popular and useful for children who need help with communication.

Ann le Sage

Bingham Park, past and present

In 2021, I organised an FoPV walk which looked into the history of the Bingham Park area. In 1911, Sir John Bingham had offered his wife Maria the choice between a set of jewels for herself or gifting an area of land for the people of Sheffield. Happily for us, Lady Bingham made the altruistic choice, that the children of Sheffield should have access to the land - which is indeed a jewel - forever, and Bingham Park came into being. A booklet 'Bingham Park 1911 -2011 A Local History' is available as a free download from the FoPV website.

A follow up walk in 2023 recognised the 'jewel' that Bingham Park has become and also the extra benefits achieved by Bingham Park Community Group (BPCG), and Friends of the Porter Valley, with the support of Sheffield Parks Dept (SPD). Two redundant courts had been commissioned by SPD as pay to play tennis courts, which have proved very successful. In discussion with SPD, BPCG advocated that the remaining courts should be free to access, with one in joint use for netball and basketball. This proved such a success that a second basketball court was commissioned and is now in use. With the addition of picnic tables, benches and extra litter bins, the area has been transformed.

The last redundant court has a excellent resurfaced area and walls in good repair, following work in 2019 and 2023. Plans are being drawn up, in consultation with BPCG committee members, by an architect (who is also a skateboarder!) for a skateboard area to be contained within the court boundaries.

All the work described has required considerable fundraising and support from individuals locally, from BPCG, FOPV and the Council - for which much thanks.

Glyn Mansell



Forge Dam

Summer brings warm weather and less rain, and the recent “drought” has highlighted the problem outlined in the talk that Claire Watts and I gave at the open meeting in May. The low flows are insufficient to keep water levels up, due to leakage through the old opening at the base of the spillway. Efforts to seal this opening during the recent contract were frustrated by leakage through the dam wall at the spillway and, whilst this had a benefit keeping flows through to feed Wire Mill Dam, this cannot be tolerated long term. Before the silt was taken out of the pond the silt itself was sealing the leaky wall and opening. We have met with the Council to press for a solution to this problem and they have agreed to appoint an expert civil engineering consultant to advise on an appropriate solution.

The low water levels have exposed shallow areas where the water depths are minimal near the island, and it is planned that more silt will be removed here when the silt trap is next emptied. *David Young*

Brownie and Beaver helpers around Forge Dam



A fine Wednesday evening in early July saw 22 excited Brownies from the Fulwood Pack working around Forge Dam. With wellies, trowels, gloves and insect repellent they were suitably prepared! Three groups headed off to check paths, clear drains, collect litter and cut back overgrowing bushes whilst the fourth group remained as gardeners near the café. They planted out dead nettles and geraniums along the side of the path; hard work in compacted soil. They then raked over empty areas and, the favourite job of all, scattered poppy and marigold seeds. One Brownie is coming back next week to see if her seeds have

grown! Great fun was had clearing sticky balls (goosegrass) from the plants by the café and a large plastic sack was filled with weeds. Everyone enjoyed being in the open air “doing something useful”.

In the evening of 15th May, Laura Johnson brought her Beaver Colony to Forge Dam with the intention of carrying out some community service. Helped by other leaders, parents and helpers, they worked hard for an hour with helpful suggestions from Ann le Sage. Their task was to improve the flower beds which are behind the roped off barrier. They brought some new bedding plants with them and these were enthusiastically planted after a good weeding session. Work progressed at a merry pace and mulch was borrowed to the flower beds and spread around. Liberal quantities of water were then applied. All in all, a great improvement in the flower beds was achieved. FoPV is grateful for this valuable contribution from the Fulwood Beaver Scouts which has become a regular contribution. We look forward to seeing them again next year.



Hilary White and Dave Clegg

Time Marches On !

And waits for no man , or woman. Do you have a picture-or pictures - showing the beauty of the Porter Valley as our thoughts turn to the 2024 FoPV Calendar? Photographs of animals, plants, insects or just the stunning scenery, all pictures are welcomed for consideration for inclusion in next year’s calendar. Please send them to pictures@fopv.org.uk.

Rob Peck

Secretary:
Glynis Jones
25 Endcliffe Rise Road
S11 8RU

Tel 2668332
secretary@fopv.org.uk

Annual Membership:

Single: £10
Family: £15
Concession: £5

For membership forms
and online application
visit our website.

STOP PRESS

Visitor Survey at Forge Dam

Could you help us with a survey of footfall at Forge Dam? The council would like us to record the numbers and destinations of people passing through, in order to build up a picture of trends, and inform management plans. Please contact me (annpisan@gmail.com) if you think you could give us a couple of hours a month and join the monitoring team.
(Ann le Sage)

The Committee:

Ann le Sage
Chair / talks
Lyndon Porter
Treasurer / walks
Glynis Jones
Secretary / newsletter
Les Greenwood
Newsletter
Mike Halliwell
Website / membership
Glyn Mansell
FD playground project
Rob Peck
Safety officer
David Young
Vice chair

Work Morning Update

On a damp and soggy day - one of relatively few this June - 10 stalwart volunteers tackled balsam growing in or around Forge Dam. Dave and Chris dealt with some below Forge Dam then rejoined the main group. A clump had been spotted growing on the island so (with throw rope) we walked across to clear what turned out to be a sizeable infestation along the northern edge of the dam. There were also lots of smaller plants growing alongside the dam wall. We had a concern that there was giant hogweed growing on the island as this is poisonous but happily it was identified as the non-poisonous variety.

Moving to the wetland accessed by the footpath leading up to Quiet Lane, we did a thorough job of clearing growth in that area. Plants such as meadowsweet, watermint, water forget-me-not and frogbit are now beginning to appear.

Meanwhile, volunteers Tony and Peter were beavering away, rubbing down the railings above the cafe and repainting. There was a bit of shelter so the drizzle wasn't too much of a problem! Last but not least, Ann weeded the border, forking the earth edges and tied up the Masquerade climbing rose by the outside tap.

John Gittins & Les Greenwood

Porter Brook River Rangers

We have recently been in conversation with the Sheaf and Porter Rivers Trust regarding their monitoring of sewer and surface water outfalls in Sheffield's river system. They have a number of volunteer rangers covering the entire Sheaf and the lower section of the Porter downstream of Hunter's Bar. Their task is to monitor the river looking out with eyes and noses (!) at any unusual flows and noxious items from outfalls and in the river itself. The idea is that reporting anything unusual to Yorkshire Water and The Environment Agency will help them with the health of the rivers.

We now have three FoPV volunteers looking after our section of the Brook from Hunter's Bar up to Forge Dam. I have been involved in their training, along with Martin Stranex of the Trust. We hope they enjoy the experience as well as feel that they are contributing to our Valley's river quality; it's a lovely walk anyway!

David Young

Activities for August to November

Any changes in the following details will be available on the website

When and Where	What and Who
Weds 2 nd August, 7.30pm Bents Green Methodist Church Hall	Putting the Sheaf and Porter back into Sheffield Open Meeting and talk by Simon Ogden
Saturday 5 th August, 10.30 am	Butterflies and their food plants A walk led by Ros Hancock
Thursday 10 th August, 9.30 am	Conservation work morning
Tuesday 22 nd August, 9.30 am	Conservation work morning
Saturday 2 nd September, 10.30 am	Badgers A walk led by Dave Swift
Thursday 14 th September, 9.30 am	Conservation work morning
Tuesday 26 th September, 9.30 am	Conservation work morning
Saturday 7 th October, 10 am	Discovering Endcliffe Park A walk led by Sue Turner
Thursday 12 th October, 9.30 am	Conservation work morning
Thursday 24 th October, 9.30 am	Conservation work morning
Weds 1 st November, 7.30 pm Bents Green Methodist Church Hall	AGM and Open Meeting

Conservation work mornings: for details, please contact Dave Clegg orielclegg@aol.com or Lyndon Porter lyndon@the-porters.me.uk or visit our website FOPV.org.uk

Walks: These are ticket events – for details and registration, please visit our website walks page. Registration opens two weeks before the walk.