

# Ramblers Gems

A Spring Vale Rambling Class Publication

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## Thought of the week



Watch the sunrise at least once a year.  
Put a lot of marshmallows in your hot chocolate.  
Lie on your back and look at the stars.  
Never buy a coffee table you can't put your feet on.  
Never pass up a chance to jump on a trampoline.  
Don't overlook life's small joys while searching for the big ones.

H. Jackson Brown

Jane C

## Monster Alert



Giant Hogweed has been listed as the most dangerous plant in Britain. This deadly plant is in the news again this year for its severe dermal reactions in both humans and animals after only a brief contact. The plant is now rapidly spreading throughout the UK and is usually found around watersides as well as in grassy areas and open woods.

Exposure to hogweed sap can occur simply by brushing against it with bare skin and this causes skin ulcerations, fluid-filled blisters and vomiting. Signs can develop rapidly within a few hours and open skin lesions pose the risk of secondary infections. The symptoms are further aggravated by sunlight.

**Please take care, especially with children and dogs and avoid this extremely dangerous hazard.**

## A Darwen to Mellor Walk

*This is an account of a Ramble undertaken by the Class on Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> April 1933 and was published within the local newspaper The Darwen Advertiser*

This walk continues from last week Volume 1 Issue 9

..... Going over the Leeds Liverpool canal bridge we went down the lane, through the yard at Sun Paper Mill and came to the main road just above Feniscowles Hall. It was decided to have dinner here, having walked about five miles.

Feniscowles Hall was built in 1808 and was early in the possession of Thomas Ainsworth who signed himself as of Pheniscowles, Pleasington, yeoman. The hall is pleasantly situated, only for the now evil smelling River Darwen, which is joined here by the Roddlesworth stream. The hall is now in a dilapidated condition, but is much used by visitors where the grounds are used for pleasure. Leaving the hall, we went to the right and turned off to the right by the top of the houses making our way up the lane and crossing the stile on the left before reaching Hillock Farm. Crossing the fields, we came to the wood and descended to the river, walking along its banks. Here we found several botanical specimens, including barren strawberry, golden saxifrage and the moschatel. Following along the riverside past the waterfall we went under the high viaduct, crossed the footbridge over the cutting which carries the water to the water wheel at the mill. Interest was taken in seeing the huge wheel as it worked. Passing along by old cottages we came to the road that leads down from Hoghton and going to the right we took to the left through a gate just before reaching the other mill. Passing behind the houses and over the footbridge we climb up the steep and came into a lane. Turning to the right we crossed a stile on the left near Bolton Hall and went by the farm and across the fields to the woodside, crossing a stile and making our way to Bullock Farm below.

Going through the yard, we followed the riverside until Salmesbury Paper Mill was reached. Another short rest and then we went up the lane, arriving at the road near Nabs Head. Going down the road, past the Sewage Works we crossed a stile on the right and entered the fields to Hooster Farm. Crossing the farmyard we went down the lane on the left and arrived at Preston New Road, near Salmesbury Hall.



Here we had tea, having walked 5<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> miles since dinner. After tea we strolled round the old buildings. In the 12<sup>th</sup> century we find mention of the manor being held by a Samlesbury. The Southworths lived from about the 14<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> century. The old hall has its ghost story. "The legend of the White Lady of Samlesbury" a daughter of one of the Southworths, whom, it is said died a maniac with the name of her murdered lover ever on her lips. Leaving this historical hall we went through the farmyard and passing through the fields came to Myerscough Smithy. Myerscough is said to have been formerly a forest or park, belonging to the Crown and mention is made of Red Deer in Myerscough Park, Sir Thomas Tylesley resided at Myerscough Hall now a farm. King John is said to have entertained here.

Passing behind the hotel we went by Rigby Fold, across the fields by Pickering Farm and Cheetham House and entered the lane Jackson's Bank. In this lane we saw dog violets, stichwort, marsh marigold, primrose and sloe. We stayed on the lane to admire the wonderful view of the sweeping bend the river makes. Passing Jackson's Bank Farm and Waterside Farm, we traverse the fields and then a footbridge up the bank to a stile and through the fields to Bowfield Farm. Veering here to the left, we turned over a stile on the right near Bowfield Farm and crossed over Balderstone Grange grounds, coming out by Carter Fold and onto the main road road. Turning to the left we passed Fielden' Arms at Mellor Brook and crossing the road climbed up the steep road to Mellor village, arriving at the War Memorial, feeling well satisfied with our 16 miles walk, though a little tired, through valleys and over hills, by woods and streams.

We boarded a bus here at about seven o'clock and on arrival in Blackburn caught the bus to Darwen.

## Haslingden Grane - A story built on stone

As part of the West Pennine Moors Site of Special Scientific Interest, Haslingden Grane reflects many aspects of Pennine Lancashire. For the walker it offers a landscape combining natural features with agricultural and industrial heritage. 'Grane' is from the Norse 'grein'- a smaller valley forking from a larger valley. It is the valley of Ogden Brook, which rises on Pike Low, flowing to the River Irwell. Starting as a deep narrow clough, the valley widens out to a basin with stepped outcrops of gritstone and shales, with moorland above. Gritstone is hard, withstanding erosion, and has been much quarried here, for flagstones and vaccary walls. Shale is easily worn away, and forms poor quality soil, acidic and deficient in nutrients. Together with the wet climate, this means limited pastoral farming, with sheep and cattle. However the underlying geology, together with the growth of nearby industrial towns, meant that between 1842 and 1912, three large reservoirs were constructed.



Calf Hey Reservoir

It was during this time that changes in industrial practice and the population migration from the valley to the towns meant that the Grane became a deserted valley. Hopefully, future articles will outline Grane history from 4000BC, Medieval, Tudor, to the growth, the change and prosperity of the 18th and 19th centuries with the eventual decline and decay. The expansion of trade, initially wool but later cotton items, identified a need of transportation from the farmsteads and villages to the

nearby towns such as Haslingden, Blackburn and Manchester. Several ancient route ways connected Grane with other communities. What is now open and unfrequented moorland was criss-crossed with footpaths and packhorse ways forming an intricate network of routes linking valleys. There were routes over Haslingden Moor to Oswaldtwistle and Accrington, westwards to Hoddlesden and Darwen (then just a village), southwest to Turton, Edgworth and Bolton.

All routes, before good roads and railway links, were important for trade, much material being carried on the backs of men and ponies. The ancient road between Blackburn and Haslingden was replaced in 1810 by a turnpike (now the B6232) designed by Blind Jack of Knaresborough, a well respected road engineer. The new road was built with an easier gradient and gradual curves taking a line to the south of Haslingden, giving a better approach to both Helmshore and Bury.

The area of Grane contains a complex network of paths, tracks and lanes that link farms and villages. Many gave access to moorland, for grazing rights and later there would be additional routes to quarries, slate pits and mills. Today, these form the public footpaths that we love to walk when visiting the Haslingden Grane Area.



Looking up the Grane Valley

**Alan R**

## Walking the Tolkien Trail

On a gloriously sunny, lockdown morning at the end of May, we decided to venture out of Longridge and walk the Tolkien Trail - an easy circular walk from Hurst Green. The countryside in this area is said to have inspired JRR Tolkien when writing Lord of the Rings, whilst he stayed at Stonyhurst College visiting his son. Leaving Hurst Green by Warren Fold we were soon walking through lush, undulating pasture land. (Photo 1)



Progressing further there is a magnificent view of Stonyhurst College, the Pavilions and Observatories. Other buildings of note are St Mary's Hall and the medieval barn at Hall Barn Farm. From here we also enjoyed a view of the distinctive Pendle Hill, and Clitheroe Castle.

The walk eventually drops down toward the River Hodder via a steep path through Over Hacking Wood. (Photo2)



Following the Hodder we eventually came across the ruins of Cromwell's Bridge which still spans the width of the river.

It was built in 1531 as a packhorse bridge, and named after Oliver Cromwell who passed over it in 1648 with his army. (Photo3)



The route diverts away from the river via Winckley Hall and rejoins the riverside at the confluence of the Hodder and the Ribble.

A scenic spot to rest a while. (photo 4)



Further along, we were fascinated by a busy colony of Sandmartins living in the river bank, and enjoyed watching their agile flight.

The remainder of the walk follows the Ribble, and upon reaching the aqueduct, bears right towards Hurst Green. Just short of 7 miles, our walk ended in the car park of The Shireburn Arms. We longed to take a seat in the garden, order some food and drink, and enjoy the view, but lockdown meant this was not possible.

We returned home feeling uplifted by the beauty and variety of the landscapes discovered on this walk...truly inspirational...but not a Hobbit in sight.

A detailed leaflet to accompany this walk is available from [www.visitlancashire.com](http://www.visitlancashire.com)

Julie C

## A Bit More than a Day Trip!!

I have never seen so much sea and so many voes, lochs and lochans. The islands are so much bigger than I expected. Not many trees but Shetland is huge, green, blue, hilly and breathtakingly beautiful. I was stunned from the moment I arrived.

Walk leaders at SVRC have a guideline of not more than one hour-ish easy drive to the walk start point and car parking. I am used to something hugely different on my island walking holidays. Sometimes we have to enjoy one or two ferry crossings just to get to the start of the best walks.

Staying on the remote West Mainland of Shetland in an 18<sup>th</sup> century house beside a quiet voe (a small bay, creek or drowned valley) near Waas we had an exceedingly early start for our Unst walk. We drove 31 miles north through Mainland on the A971 and A968 to Toft ferry terminal.

We took the ferry to Ulsta on Yell. Continuing up the west side of Yell on the A968 we could look across Yell Sound and the Ness of Burravoe to North Mainland where we could see the coastal walk that we had done on our first day on Shetland.

Donning our walking gear we had gone straight from the Lerwick ferry terminal after our overnight journey from Aberdeen to the diverse peninsula of Northmavine and from the end of the public road at Kame of Isbister, Fethaland we hiked to the site of a major 19<sup>th</sup> century Haaf fishing station and the lighthouse. A tough start but our guide likes remote places and to assess the measure of his walkers on the first hike. No easing us in with a gentle walk and there are no formal footpaths so everything is over rough terrain.

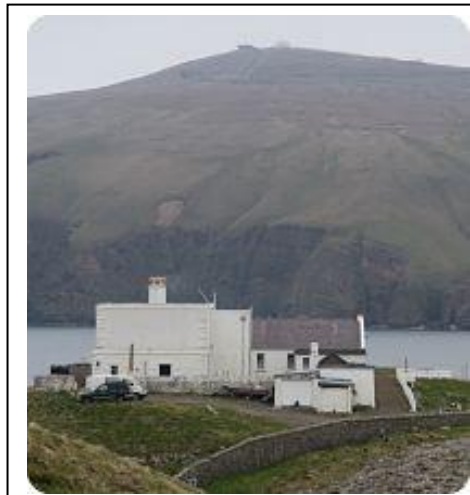
Today I noticed that Yell seemed to have more peat cutting than anywhere else on Shetland. Proceeding north east up Yell, and after another 21 miles in the minibus, we arrived at Gutcher to await our second ferry. This ferry took us across Bluemull Sound to Unst. The "world's first community-owned tidal power generator" became operational in Bluemull Sound in April 2014. I should explain here that you are not allowed to leave your vehicle during these ferry crossings.

Keeping on our northern route from Belmont ferry terminal, through Viking Unst, we made our way along the 14 miles to Hermaness to finally stretch our legs before our four hour hike.

Just imagine after the long 76-mile journey in the minibus and two ferries arriving at the national nature reserve of Hermaness to find the information centre, café and toilets closed for 2019! How popular would that be on a coach ramble! It was cold and there was a biting wind at the car park.



Hermaness National Nature Reserve  
A tiny section of the peninsula featuring our walk guide.



The Hermaness N.N.R building

If you like seabird breeding colonies this is the biggest in Britain. You need to wear a hat and hope you are not dive bombed by Bonxie (Great Skua) nesting in the heathland. The Great Skua is an aggressive pirate of the seas, deliberately harassing *birds* as large as gannets to steal a free meal. *Bonxie* is a Shetland name of Norse origin.

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The reserve covers the whole of the Hermaness peninsula, and I got to see lots of puffins (Tammy Norie) breeding in burrows on the grassy banks at the top of the cliffs. You can get remarkably close to these timid and comical birds. In the distance we could see Britain's most northerly lighthouse built in 1858 and Muckle Flugga. The Rumbling and Skerry islands looked as if they were covered in snow, because of the number of white gannets and the amount of guano (droppings) present at this time of year.



After the long walk and up and over Hermaness Hill, a change in the weather, and going up over and down the cliff top headlands as we gradually removed layers of warm clothing we returned to the car park and were ready to search for a comfort stop. We travelled east via Burrafirth to the green and fertile area of Haroldswick. It is said it is named after King Harald Fairhair who moored his Viking fleet here in 875AD. You are only 20 nautical miles from Bergen, Norway at this point and 76 miles from your bed for the night! On route we saw Skidbladner, a replica Viking long-ship, the Unst bus shelter equipped with all the comforts of home but without a door and the Heritage Centre.



Eventually finding the Unst Boat Haven we located the most northerly tearoom in the UK. Victoria's Vintage Tea Room is on the Beach Road at Haroldswick. This is a long way and a bit of a detour to come, for a cuppa and a piece o' cake.



Muckle Flugga with the lighthouse on the right and the other islands covered in 'snow'!

But, the selection of teas, Italian coffee, homemade cakes, preserves, local produce and ice-cream all served in an assortment of fine bone china was certainly worth it. The tearoom also had three other special features loved by hikers – toilets, free Wi-Fi and a gift shop. Victoria is from Devon and incredibly good at making scones!

Sitting outside on the wall we had an amazing view down the voe (inlet), a chance encounter with some seals, but sadly no otters this day. On these walks you don't just have to be back at the minibus on time you have to allow time to get to all the ferries early or you may not get back to your accommodation that night.

This is Part 3 of 'I love a good read'. I am currently reading the Shetland Sailing Mysteries by Marsali Taylor and reliving my 2019 walks and visits to Shetland Mainland, Unst, Yell, Papa Stour, West Mainland, Scalloway, Mousa, Lerwick, St Ninian's Isle and Sumburgh Head as I turn the pages of each novel.

The familiar sailing terminology used by Cass, the lead character, takes me back to my yachting days in the 1990s and I can now decipher a lot of the Norse and Shetlandic words without resorting to the glossary at the back of the books.

I have only read one of Anne Cleaves, Shetland Mystery books but seen some of the episodes from the five TV series. Shetland is not dark, grey and gloomy as portrayed, for dramatic effect, in the TV episodes.

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I have visited Lerwick town and the outside of the home of DI Jimmy Perez. These are about the only two locations used in Shetland! Don't go to Shetland looking for the TV series locations because you will not find them go instead to Fair Isle, Glasgow, Renfrewshire, Ayr, Barrhead and Irvine.



House in Lerwick used for DI Jimmy Perez home - exterior location only. 'Shetland' TV series.

Shetland has Viking history and Norse Sagas, plenty of nature and is environmentally friendly, wonderful sandy beaches, spectacular cliff tops, rugged coastline, wildflowers, lots of remote places, a wealth of archaeological and historic sites, brochs, castles and mansions, a complex geology, ayres and tombolos and an interesting and sometimes challenging hyper oceanic climate controlled by the North Atlantic weather. It is overwhelmingly beautiful, colourful and yet mysterious. Each panorama and vista took my breath away as did the hills which I had not expected!

**Barbara S**

## **Royal Hunting Grounds**

Lancashire was a rich royal hunting area better known today as the Forest of Bowland and the Forest of Trawden. The land has passed through many hands including being part of Northumbrian Kings lands in the 7<sup>th</sup> Century, part of the Jorvik history with its connection to the Vikings, to the Earl of Wessex, to Roger de Poitou before coming into the possession of the de Lacys of Clitheroe in the 12<sup>th</sup> Century. These lands were established to provide the King with the opportunity to visit and to hunt for deer and wild boar and at that time would have been completely wooded.

Over a long period of transition, both areas were very gradually transformed from hunting to pastoral communities as they became more populated and small commercial cattle farms were required to meet needs of the time. The first farms were named The Vaccary and the "vaccary walling" used to enclose the livestock cows, sheep, and oxen dates from that time. Walling constructed of giant slab stones in their design continues to carry the title of Vaccary. This style of walling was better known for being associated with monastic granges or on lands held by lay lords playing an important role usually with dairy cattle, dairies and cheese houses.

In the later medieval period these large pasture lands became subdivided into small holdings and the work undertaken in the north of the county remained rural whilst in the south the work in these small hamlets or farmsteads became more driven by the need to get involved in the beginnings of the textile trade. Handloom weaving, using cotton or silk was to be their means of providing for their families. The thing that remained standing looking over all these areas were the Vaccary walls and are still there today if you were to only look for the place names on a map and arrange a walk around them.

There is no better example than the vaccary walls that can be found around Helmshore and the Rossendale Valley, at Tockholes and Wycoller. Farmstead names such Cowark and Laund around Bowland, the Dunsop Bridge and Slaidburn areas give another clue to the connection with the creation of new pasture land from forest clearance.

**Eleanor**



Vaccary Walls at Wycoller