

# Ramblers Gems

A Spring Vale Rambling Class Publication

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## Advice to Walkers

Whether alone, with your family or with members of another household, the advice for all walkers is to:

### 1 - Be prepared

Make sure your destination is open and ready to receive visitors.

### 2 - Be safe

Continue to maintain good hygiene and physical distancing and self-isolate if you are showing coronavirus symptoms or have been in contact with anyone who is infected.

### 3 - Be considerate

Be sensitive to the rural communities. If considering travelling further from home to walk make sure you follow the **Countryside Code** (England and Wales) and the **Access Code** (Scotland).

**SVRC are still not able to offer any Group walks yet.**

The photograph of the little girl walking her dog in Sunnyside Wood in the 9<sup>th</sup> edition of Ramblers Gems was Barbara S. who grew up in Darwen in the 60's. Sorry no prizes for guessing who it was.

## One for Sorrow

Corvidae is a family of birds that contains the crows, rooks, jackdaws and magpies, The Magpie (*Pica Pica*) is a hard bird to miss with its iridescent black and white feathers, it is loud, bold and often seen being mobbed by other birds as it searches for nests to raid, it's favourite source of food. The bird is often associated with good or bad luck with this child's playground song.

*"One for sorrow, two for joy;  
Three for a girl, four for a boy;  
Five for silver, six for gold;  
Seven for a secret, never to be told;  
Eight for a wish, nine for a kiss;  
Ten for a bird that's best to miss."*

It's probably fair to say that the magpie is by far-and-away the least popular of all the birds which visit our gardens. The magpies' reputation for eating young birds has earned it a high level of unpopularity; this has fuelled the belief that the species is partly responsible for the decline in the songbird numbers. A study commissioned by the RSPB found no evidence that magpies were responsible for this decline. Yes they do indeed eat young birds – as most species of corvid do – but not to the point that they adversely affect long-term population trends.



Michael C

## The Hidden Ways

Did you do the Crumbly Cheese Walk with me in 2019? If yes, then you met Wildlife Charlie, from Scorton, strimming the path in front of us by the side of the church at Churchtown. Charlie is a work associate and a friend. Wildlife Wednesdays in parks and schools were always so much fun with Charlie and I miss them.

Charlie knows I love walking and he knows I love Scotland and the Islands. So, he spotted a book in a shop and bought me a present. This is part four of 'I Love a Good Read' and how books contribute to my walking experiences.

The book 'The Hidden Ways' starts with Alastair Moffat reminiscing about the walks near his grannie's farm cottage and how little the rural area has changed since 1896.

"To walk to where she once stood and looked south ... is to let me walk beside her once more". One sentence and I was hooked because, as you all know, I love to walk in the places I walked with my mum and dad. Not quite so easy to walk in the steps of my grannie because I would have to visit Staffordshire and the lane outside her cottage gate is now a dual carriageway bypass and at the back of the cottage there is a housing estate across our field path to the Blacksmith's shop Boatyard, Stone railway station and Joules brewery on the Trent and Mersey Canal.

Our ancestors walked everywhere in all weathers before mass transport arrived. My mum thought nothing of walking 7-8 miles via the canal or the River Trent to visit her grandparents at Darlaston Hall North Lodge or to go to a dance at Trentham Gardens. Chapters 1 and 2 'The First Steps' and 'Faltering Steps' I read on the train up to Perthshire. Chapter 3 starts with a description of corncrakes and the grating 'krek-krek' they make. I heard a corncrake outside my bedroom window at Castlebay, Barra in the Outer Hebrides and can hear it now as I write this article.

So, arriving in Perthshire my days out began. Chapter 3 - Alastair writes, 'It seems only right to begin in Perthshire' and I was there sitting in bed reading the book. Suddenly I exclaimed, "This book, I was there yesterday" and looked more closely at the map. Walk 1 is *The River Road* – Loch Tay to the Firth of Tay. I have never got past Walk 1 but I do have nine other walks to look forward to. The Cheviot

Hills, Berwick on Tweed and Ballachulish are tempting.

Back to the River Tay which by the way is 117 miles long! I did not get to Fortingall and the ancient Yew tree (tree of eternity), but we got a quick glimpse of the standing stones as we drove by the stone circle of Croft Moraig's Stones on the A827. The photographs below are of The Scottish Crannog Centre Kenmore where the Loch Tay drains into the River Tay and also of the start of our walk we visited where we saw The General Wades Bridge over the Tay at Aberfeldy.



The Scottish Crannog Centre



Wades Bridge at Aberfeldy

The best bit of the Aberfeldy walk was up the gorge past the dramatic waterfalls. Robert Burns' was here and that led me to read his composition, *The Birks o' Aberfeldy*. (Birk means birch). Through mixed, mature woodland the burn tumbles white over rocky rapids and the only way is up! At the top, the Moness Burn (Birk Falls) drops over an almost vertical rock face. Having climbed to a significant height we walked over the wooden bridge to our lunch stop.

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Robert Burns  
Birks O' Aberfeldy



Moness Burn (Birk Falls)

We were now on Rob Roy Way (RRW). Robert Roy MacGregor (baptised 7 March 1671 died 1734) was a Scottish outlaw, who later became a folk hero. Something else I need to read! Rob Roy (1817) is a historical novel by Walter Scott. Old woods like this are atmospheric and you can let your imagination run wild as you gaze about you.

My grannie told me that fairies, who loved to dance in the moonlight, use tree stumps as stages so I know woods can be magical too. Maybe the fairies and elves drink the sap from the birch trees which are still used in drinks, cosmetics and health care products today. Think about Spirits of Nature (beautiful maidens) and Shadow-Walkers (elves that have powers in shadow and darkness) if you don't believe me! There is botanic evidence that this wood has been here for more than 8,000 years so who knows what mysterious goings on it has hosted.

Downhill following RRW we made our way back to The Watermill, Aberfeldy, for drinks and exceedingly good and unusual cakes then browsed the bookshop

We drove home via the Tummel Bridge with views of Schiehallion which means Magic Mountain of the Caledonians.

*To be continued in future editions*

**Barbara S**

## The Darwen Plane Crash

Seventy five years ago on a Sunday afternoon, July 29, 1945, a lone fighter plane, cruising over Darwen Moor came down above Bull Hill. It still remains a mystery as to why this North American P51C Mustang, the world's finest long-range single-seat fighter, crashed; killing its Polish pilot Herbert Noga,

It was a fine day, although it was misty from the industrial haze that hung over the area. The war in Europe had ended a few weeks earlier and the plane was on a routine ferrying job from the HQ of the legendary Polish Squadron at RAF Coltishall in the Norfolk Broads to the Polish Air Force base at Blackpool or perhaps on route to the vast US centre at Burtonwood. No one is sure. Warrant Officer Noga was buried with full military honours at Layton Cemetery Blackpool.



Before the rain came, I decided to see what damage the recent fires had done to Darwen Moors and inadvertently came across the crash site of Herbert Noga, the Polish airman who died on that fateful day.

The crash site has been maintained and is now marked by a cross, Polish flag, a photograph of Herbert and other small remembrances. After the fires only the wreckage remained, but the memorial has now been restored. It is well worth a visit and can be very atmospheric.

There are several routes to the crash site; the approximate position of which is marked as Wives Hill on the OS map. One route is from the top of Bury Fold Lane, up towards Lords Hall and then along the Witton Weavers Way. The area can also be reached from the Whitehall area and also from the Grainings Wood car park on the A666. When on the moor climb the ladder stile and the site lies along the path ahead.

**Jane C**

## A Craven Ramble from 1980

*This is an account of the Good Friday Ramble which took place on Friday 4<sup>th</sup> April 1980, written by Tom Johnstone. Articles from Tom regularly appeared in Lancashire Evening Telegraph, he was a past Treasurer of the Class, a Vice President and walks leader who sadly passed away in 2018.*

A full coach of members from Spring Vale Rambling Class left Darwen on a sunny Good Friday morning bound for Skipton with early morning mist on route. This soon disappeared and their arrival only slightly delayed by heavy traffic.

The ramble included a town tour, a visit to places of special interest, a country walk and a more strenuous hike of 11 miles in the Craven countryside.

Leaving Skipton and its busy market in warm sunshine members took the Grassington road over the canal to turn off by the modernised watermill and then a short stiff climb brought them to the golf links. Crossing the links to Brackenly Lane and Tarn Hows farm they soon reached the path leading to Flashby Fell.

After a break for lunch they started to climb Sharp How (1170 feet) at a slow and steady rate and were rewarded with good views over Gargrave to Pendle Hill in the west and Rylstone Fell in the east.

From the fell top the going was rough, but reasonably dry and the downhill path soon brought them to Scale Hill Farm. Then a short stiff climb to the remains of Norton Tower everyone was rewarded with a brief rest. Then tiring slightly they followed a rough path through dead bracken up the side of Waterfall Gill, eventually to cross the tumbling beck and cross deep heather disturbing grouse as they went.

A welcome tea break came when they reached Crookrise Crag Top at 1361 feet. The path downwards along Crookrise Crag with hidden pockets of snow gave the youngsters their last chance for snowballing and as they descended to Cragnook Farm there were extensive views over Skipton. Barden and Ilkley moors and the secluded Embsay Reservoir. Their homeward route took them via Embsay village and finally into Skipton where they left for Darwen.

On Easter Saturday 30 members joined the Class for their ramble in the area of Lower Darwen, Belthorn, Eccleshill and Waterside and the next outing is to Samlesbury, Mellor and Blackburn on Saturday April 19. Members can catch a bus from Blackburn to Preston at 1.15pm

**Tom Johnstone**



The Trig point on Crookrise Crag Top

## The Famine Road

The story in a previous edition from Michael about “King Cotton’s” effect on Tockholes, made me think about a more sombre story involving cotton.

A few years ago Spring Vale Rambling Class organised a ramble on the moors above Rochdale which was titled “The Cotton Famine Road”. It may seem amazing that a typical northern textile town should be affected by events thousands of miles away.

During the 1860’s, the recently born American states found themselves in a constitutional crisis which would eventually lead to civil war. The country formed itself into a federal organisation comprising the more liberal progressive northern states that had abolished slavery and the more none liberal southern states that wanted to keep the very profitable slave workforce to work their cotton plantations.

As the southern states were outnumbered by the northern states, it was only a matter of time before slavery would be abolished in the entire country. The rich slave owning plantation owners were often also civic leaders or were close acquaintances of civic leader. They decided that the only way to keep slavery was to seced from the Union of States (The USA). The northern states decided that this couldn’t be allowed to happen and declared war on the southern states. This included blockading the southern ports to apply pressure by preventing them

from exporting cotton to the northern towns of Britain. The effect was to cause the mass unemployment among the British cotton workers, many of whom understandably sided with the south against the north.

Some groups of unemployed worker however including the Rochdale unemployed supported the northern states, reasoning that however bad their situation was, the plight of the American slaves was far worse.

Some public works to give employment for the Rochdale weavers was embarked upon, including the building of a road over Rooley Moor above Rochdale. This is the “Cotton Famine Road”.

Sections of Road consist of stone setts, which were hewn by hammer and chisel from local quarries and it has been calculated that over a third of a million of these setts were laid to form the hard surface. Additional stones were cut and placed to form the edging and drainage channels running alongside.

Now forming part of the Pennine Bridleway this is one of the highest roads in England, at an altitude of over 1500 feet. This route is enjoyed by walkers, runners, ornithologists and cyclists as well as horse riders.

**Tony C**

