

Ramblers Gems

A Spring Vale Rambling Class Publication

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The Big Butterfly Count

Spring Vale Rambling Class was established to educate its members in knowing more about the countryside, plants, animals, birds and insects including butterflies.

The fine weather this spring 2020 saw the earliest average emergences of butterflies for the last 20 years and Butterfly Conservation received thousands of extra enquiries about butterfly and moth sightings made by an ever more nature-loving public.

The Big Butterfly Count is open to everyone, from ages from 3 to 103, and provides a real contribution to science and our understanding of butterfly and moth populations in the UK, a key indicator of the health of our environment, including the effects of climate change.

It is this simple to carry out a survey between Friday 17 July and Sunday 9 August choose a place to spot butterflies and moths. Watch for 15 minutes. Then record which species that you see by simply visiting Bigbutterflycount.org to find out more or download the

free Big Butterfly Count app to enter your findings. The sightings submitted will be used to map and measure populations and the geographic spread of species across the UK.



Wall

Peacock



Red Admiral

Meadow Brown



Burns Fell Memorial Walk

On the 4th July 2020 the Class had programmed this walk into the syllabus, but due to the current restrictions it was not possible to undertake this as a group. Pauline and Tony have now completed this walk and this is their account.

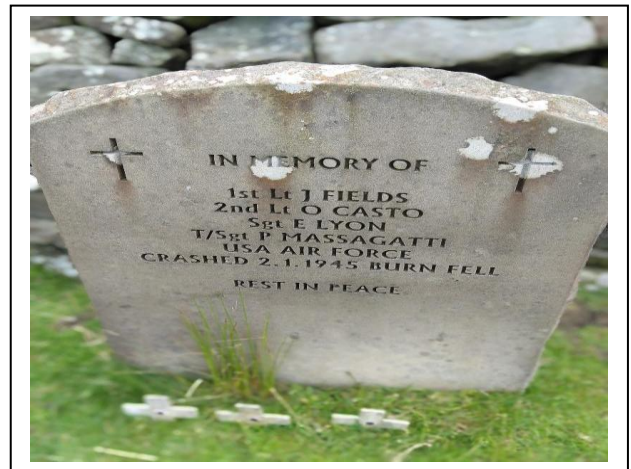
It was 10.30 am on 9th July 2020, under a cloudy but dry sky when we left the main car park in Newton and walked down the steps before turning right into the village. Another right turn took us in between a number of houses into the fields beyond. The route now leads us up to a large farm called Crawshaw. Clear indications in the line of paths in this area were non-existent and the stiles in a state of disrepair. Carrying on our way we reached Pain Hills Farm although the hill had not proved to be a pain. Going slightly left we reached Parrock Head. The walking had been easy and the paths better after leaving Crawshaw.

On reaching Back Lane we turned right, and continued for approximately 60 yards, before taking the bridleway up to Burns Fell. The area between Back Lane and Burnside had seen that much work had taken place, building what we assumed to be storage ponds for water, to prevent flooding lower down the valley. A very spectacular waterfall had been created. On passing Burnside we reached the open fell, following the distinct path that ran to Dunsop Head. At Dunsop we picked up the wall on top of Burns Fell, following it to the trig point. We now continued onto the Liberator Memorial, a tribute to the airmen who lost their lives on that fateful day in 1945. A small amount of the wreckage still remains. The fell top was very wet in places, but didn't give us many problems. In the distance we could see the Yorkshire Peaks. Close to the trig point we saw four other walkers, the only other walkers we had seen.



We had our refreshments before beginning the descent down the side of Beatrix wood, to Beatrix. We sadly walked past a couple of dead sheep on our way down off the fell. At Beatrix we turned left to pass through the farmyard and onwards to cross Oxenhurst Clough. We finally reached Bull Lane, where we turned right into a large field to arrive at Gamble Hole Farm. It was our intention to take the path across fields to Brown Hills; however this was blocked, so we retraced our steps and followed the farm drive to Brown Hills. For the final section we took the path through fields to arrive back in Newton.

The walk was 9.25 miles, other than the blocked path at Gamble Hole, and broken stiles, we didn't have any problems. The weather had been kind to us, and only began to rain as we reached Newton.



AIRMEN LOST THEIR WAY IN MIST AND SNOW SHOWERS

It was an American Consolidated B-24J Liberator nicknamed "Come along boys" belonging to 714th Bomber Squadron which crashed on Burns Fell on January 2nd 1945. The aircraft was being ferried from Seething in Norfolk to Warton which had become a vast depot for the US Airforce. On board there were 19 people including a second crew, scheduled to fly another aircraft back to the Seething air base. Remarkably, only four of the airmen were killed in the crash. After the accident it was determined that the fix on the plane was 20 miles out and the plane was flying at just 1,500 ft when it hit the top of the fell and burst into flames.

Tony W.

Haslingden Grane - An Early History

Once upon a time, Haslingden Grane was thickly wooded, with trees that were mainly Oak, Alder, and Hazel, but with Elm and Birch-pollens. The evidence for these early trees has been well preserved in acidic peat. Around 5000 BC inhabitants started to arrive and they began to use the woodland to provide timber for houses and fuel. The climate became increasingly wetter and cooler, and the tree-line descended, the summits becoming waterlogged, with peat bogs forming. The traces of Mesolithic peoples have been found on Uglow Pike, above the Calf Hey Reservoir and also evidence at Cribden Side. Further finds were unearthed when Calf Hey Reservoir was drained for repair in 1984, when flint and chert tools were found. By the Bronze Age (around 2800yrs ago), the domestication of cattle and sheep together with the evolution of bracken and grassland, made major changes to the landscape.



Stone Tools from Grane

The clearance of the woodland continued during the Iron Age and Roman periods (1200BC to 450AD), together with the extensive draining of peat bogs and mosses. This led to the typical Pennine upland landscape which we see today. However, during the period known as the 'Dark Ages' (450-900AD), some cleared land was abandoned and secondary woodland comprising of Pine, Elm and Lime was established.

After the Norman Conquest the clearance of woodland resumed, to create new pasture lands allowing larger stock-rearing farms in the upland valleys to be created. The Grane was already in many respects, becoming a man-made landscape.



Haslingden Grane

We know next to nothing of the Medieval Grane inhabitants, because very little archaeological or written evidence remains to this day. The houses are wooden with a thatched roof perhaps and rough common grazing took place on the higher slopes and moorlands. Cattle would graze on the tops in summer and lower levels in spring and autumn, with the better meadows providing winter hay. Sheep grazed outdoors all year, while cattle wintered in shippens.

The abundance of springs and streams provided water, which from the 14th Century was also used to drive millwheels for grinding corn. The diet of the local inhabitants would have been wildfowl, fish, game, fruit and nuts, essentially the community was self-sufficient. Any surpluses would have been sold at the market in Haslingden. This included wool and cloth, sold to merchants visiting from the larger market towns, such as Bolton, Bury and Manchester.

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Great geographic and economic changes took place in the 16th and 17th Centuries. Haslingden market enlarged and early industrialisation began to expand. Existing properties were enlarged and now rebuilt in stone. The Enclosure Act meant that more land was now taken from moorland with such fields being known as 'intakes'. Small hamlets now began to appear, these were coupled with farms named after the local families working them, such as Ormerod, Rothwell, Hartley, Bentley and Heap. Documentary evidence relating to taxation, births, marriages, and deaths, including probate, gives an insight into a time of prosperity and expansion. The small cottages were lit by candles made from bees wax; these were superior to the candles originally made from rushes dipped in tallow, the latter producing a thin, smoky, smelly and dim light. Heather, Gorse and Reeds would provide the bedding for the animals.

A larger scale production and trade in woollen cloth became evident in the Grane as spinning and weaving of wool from flocks became a profitable activity on larger farms. Cottage families, especially the women, were able to derive an additional income during the winter months by turning more and more to a piecework system, as the cottage handloom weaving industry developed. Flocks greatly expanded and overgrazing became a serious problem. The situation was made worse because of the reduction in moorland available for grazing use, due to land enclosure. Enforcement by Manorial Courts proved to be ineffective and eventually the system of common grazing declined and disappeared. However, the remaining moorland provided other resources, the main one being peat cut out in the summer, dried and then burnt as fuel. Peat cutting rights were called 'turbary' from the Latin 'turbarium'-peat or turf and areas to be worked were agreed and shared between the small hamlets or larger townships.

To be continued

Alan R

An Accrington Ramble

This is an account of the Ramble which took place on Saturday 8th April 1978, 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. The Ramble was led by members Sally, Jim and John Allen who lived at Stanhill

Accrington Members of the Spring Vale Rambling Class Darwen led a party of 17 adults and five juniors on the forth ramble of the season in an area not often visited by the Class. The weather was dull, cool, but dry underfoot.

Leaving the town centre via Woodnook the group followed the extinct Accrington-Haslingden railway track through a pleasantly wooded valley over Five Arches bridge where they left the valley to enter Baxenden. Crossing the road, the party headed for the golf course, but turned off at Pen Moss Farm and passed through numerous fields to reach the 17th century hamlet of Lower Stonefold and Stonefold.

The break for tea was taken on Blackmoss Common at a point where extensive views over the moors to the west stretching from Haslingden to Padiham were not easily recognisable due to low cloud. After tea the ramble continued via Mitchell's House reservoir and by track and field path to Moleside End where the members turned to cross The Coppice - Accrington's vantage point equivalent to Darwen Tower. An excellent panoramic view of Accrington and the surrounding area was a fitting reward to another enjoyable ramble. The party arrived back in Darwen at about 6.45pm.



The View from the Coppice Accrington

Tom Johnstone

The Hidden Ways cont.

On my trip to the Highlands of Scotland we also visited Dunkeld on the River Tay. In 1689 the Highland Clans rose up and a Cameronian Regiment, led by Lt. Col. William Cleland was formed to defend Dunkeld from the highland savages. To cut a long story short (I am not into historic battles but I did enjoy the Culloden experience in 2017) the highland rebels gave up the fight and retreated after a long battle between Stanley Hill and the dyke by Dunkeld Cathedral on the River Tay. Historic Blair Castle is not far away but not visited on this holiday.

Near Dunkeld is The Hermitage Woodland Walk which recently featured in an issue of Country Walking. The wood contains giant Douglas Firs, Black Linn Falls, Ossian's Hall and picturesque follies along the banks of the River Braan. If you extend your walk a magnificent view of the valley and the River Tay can be enjoyed from the Pine Cone viewpoint.



Ossian's Hall

Later that day we walk from Birnam past the ancient Birnam Oak and other remarkable trees along a lovely stretch of the River Tay to Dunkeld. The walk starts in the village of Birnam with beautiful historic buildings and a Beatrix Potter garden (more literature links).



The Birnam Oak

We found time on Sunday to visit the fish pass and hydro on the River Tay at Pitlochry. I stayed in Pitlochry and visited the hydro with my parents around the time my age increased into double figures. A few days stop off on our way to Dornoch Beach, Sunderland.



Pitlochry Fish Pass, Hydro Dam

Thank you to Wildlife Charlie and Alastair Moffat for Walk 1 in The Hidden Ways. You substantially added to my enjoyment of the River Tay, Perthshire and inspired me to look far more carefully at nature, history and the traditions that surround me when I am out walking.

The Rob Roy Way can be walked from Aberfeldy to Pitlochry. About 10 miles following the River Tay so this is another walk on the 'to do' list. No doubt whilst I am reading about his exploits as a cattle rustler, brigand and his flourishing protection racket, extracting money from people in exchange for offering them protection from thieves. He was no Robin Hood.

Barbara S