

Ramblers Gems

A Spring Vale Rambling Class Publication

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Be Prepared Not a Risk

The Cumbria Police and the Lake District's Mountain Rescue Teams have over the last few weeks seen an unprecedented amount of avoidable rescues that are putting a real strain on their volunteer team members and this is unsustainable. The overall majority of walkers and climbers enjoying the Lakeland fell are very experienced and know exactly what they are doing. However, 11 of the callouts were truly avoidable with inexperienced and ill prepared walkers finding themselves in serious, life threatening trouble being either missing or lost.

The poor weather conditions over the last few days, caught out many, but Cumbria Police have commented that many are dialing in '999' calls with as little as 1% battery remaining on their mobile phones. This means that after the initial call their battery dies and the mountain rescue team cannot get back to them which makes finding them a bigger challenge requiring more numbers of the volunteers. Many are relying on smart phone mapping apps which drain batteries quickly and then have no back up.

Stay vacation holidays are introducing a new type of visitor to the National Parks and the current quarantine

rule has the potential to make matters worse. The increase in numbers is great for the economy but a real issue for the volunteer rescue teams. A recent rescue on Scafell Pike involving a family group of three and was carried out in the correctly forecast atrocious conditions lasting 12 hours and involved five rescue teams.

What can you personally do as a new or even regular visitor to help the volunteer teams?

Exercise within your limits and avoid taking risks. Know your level of skill, competence and experience and those of your group. Make sure you have the right equipment for your trip to the hills and valleys noting that many callouts are carried out low down in the valley bottoms. Learn how to navigate, take a waterproof map and a compass, don't rely on smart phone technology, it can let you down.

Take a torch, even on the longest days, you never know when your activity will catch you out or you go to the help of a fallen or lost walker. Take a power bank battery charger it will save you a lot of grief. You can also take even more of those photos.

If you need help, be kind to the volunteers and respectful to the emergency service, rural communities and to the local farmers.



Early History of the Class

Extensive internet research has found an Article printed in My Primitive Methodist - Darwen Circuit. This is a part of the Transcription of the Article in the Christian Messenger by Joseph Maland printed in 1906

At one time Spring Vale had a most unenviable reputation for the roughness of many of its inhabitants, but during the last twenty years there has been a remarkable reformation of manners, largely owing to the uplifting influence of institutions associated with our Church. To counteract the influence of the public houses, and to find higher interests for men otherwise in danger of being ensnared by evil habits and companionships, a number of our Spring Vale friends formed a men's club. A room was provided, which serves for reading-room, library, and general meeting-place for games and conversation and discussion of questions of local and national interest. Use of the school-room is permitted for the purposes of the gymnasium and as the headquarters of the cricket and football clubs and evening classes and literary association. The membership of the club is offered to youths over seventeen years of age on payment of 1s. entrance-fee and a quarterly subscription of 1s. 6d., or an annual payment of 5s. There is now a membership of towards eighty. The club-room is closed at 10 p.m. each evening except Saturday, when it is closed at 10.30 p.m.

Affiliated with the men's club is a rambling class, which has had a career of great success, largely owing to the personal influence and endeavour of its popular leader, Mr. J.T. Fielding, who is pre-eminently well endowed for that post, having a wide and very accurate knowledge of botany, entomology, ornithology, geology, and a deep love of Nature.

A party of ten, constituted the first group of rambles. So interesting and instructive were the rambles that the number of members speedily increased, until forty or fifty men often journeyed into the country. Last year there was an average of eighty-three at each of the fourteen outings. This year the class is larger than ever. Four hundred and sixty-two persons have purchased the syllabus (which is sold for 6d, and is the credential of membership).

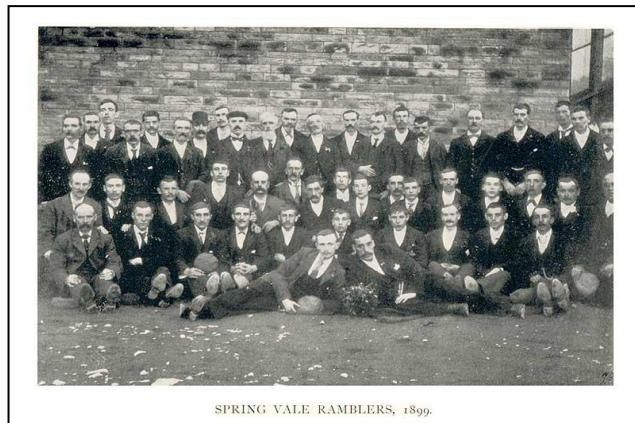
Among them are town councillors and tradesmen, but the bulk of them are mill operatives, many of whom,

were it not for these health-giving and educative rambles, would be in danger of beguilement by evil associations and questionable habits. The rambles often cover a distance of twelve or thirteen miles; several are thrown open to ladies, and on these less ground is mapped out to be traversed.

The chief centre of the rambles is the charming Ribble Valley, so rich in scenic beauty, botanical and geological treasures, and historical lore. Mr. Fielding has made a life-long study of this district, and is a recognized authority upon it, having published a magnificent handbook of views, – his own photography, – and concise, bright, historical notices, and lectured to scores of audiences in all parts of North-East Lancashire upon its fascinating history and beauty.

The rambles have proved a great educative force. In the early history of the class the plants and flowers picked up on the rambles were gathered together, and nights set apart for the study of the specimens. In one season alone no less than 132 different species of plants were dried and pressed. Now the bulk of the rambles can name almost every plant and flower in the hedgerow; and many of these amateur botanists, be it noted, have been reclaimed from the street corner, surely a noble result worthy of high appreciation!

The latest development of the class is the publication of a magazine recording the rambles and setting forth the varied interests connected therewith. A photographer of special ability, and wielding the facile pen of a picturesque writer, Mr. Fielding with pen and camera, reproduces the rambles in a brightly-written and artistically-produced threepenny monthly entitled "The Rambler," which has already attained a circulation of 900, and is a welcome visitor to many homes in Darwen and the adjacent town of Blackburn.



Michael C

Around Trawden Forest

This is a circular 6 mile walk with a 2.5 mile option to climb Boulsworth Hill. The route starts where parking is easier at the Wycoller car park. The car park is situated on the outskirts of the village which is kept car free, the route now follows the roadside track into Wycoller village. Turn right by the old Packhorse Bridge to go up the track towards Ravens Rock Farm, take the steps on the right and follow the path as it continues up through the plantation which was established by Lancashire County Council in 1975 and is filled with Alder, Rowan, Birch and Larch trees. The Alder tree is planted to enrich the soil as its roots 'fix' nitrogen from the air to produce a reservoir of nutrient. Now leave the plantation to climb over the 'pulpit' stile, keeping to the right around Germany Farm, and pass the next farm, Little Laith. Follow the path downhill towards Trawden keeping to the edge of the field. At a gate bear left over the cattle grid and go down to Trawden Brook before rising up to pass an old mill site.



Turn left onto the lane (be careful here of traffic). At Frighams Cottage continue straight through the farmyard at Lodge Moss, crossing a small brook by a bridge. Turn right and head towards Lumb Spout waterfall. The cascade has cut a channel in the soft sandstone cliff. It appears that the stream was diverted to add to the Victorian's idea of an attractive tourist spot! Retrace your steps to the bridge, then right up the slope and over the stile, following the wall to Spoutley Lumb Farm. You are now on the Pennine Bridleway/Pendle Way/Bronte Way.

Those with resolve, energy and a wish to climb Boulsworth Hill should now turn right here and continue along the bridleway. After about half a mile, look out for the footpath on the left that climbs the hill

via Abbot Stone and Lad Law. The Stone has been described as a 'Druid Altar', but most likely is a boundary marker, weathered to its unusual shape. Once on the top the view is quite extensive so on a good day linger as long as the wind allows. Descend the hill via Weather Stones and Little Chair to return back onto the bridleway and then turn right.

The wall on your left separates agricultural land from the unimproved moorland. Improvement to the land was aided by lime produced from local limestone, heated in kilns before being crushed before spreading onto the land. The remains of an old kiln may be seen on the right, off in the distance. Follow the bridleway to the boundary of Wycoller Country Park at Brink Ends and then climb the stile over the stone wall. Once over, follow the path and climb a further stile to continue up the slope to the rocks, known as the 'viewpoint'. There are good views down the valley towards Wycoller from this point. After two open gateways, the route turns left and goes along the edge of the field following the valley shoulder to eventually pass a row of contorted hawthorn trees, the shapes resulting from the high altitude, harsh weather and poor soils. This whole area is dotted with glacial stone deposits known as 'erratics'. These are rocks carried along by glaciers from other areas, then deposited when the glaciers melted. The footpath continues through a gate and then turns right downhill to rejoin the valley path.



Once on the road turn left passing Wycoller Hall and the old Tythe Barn, both of which are worth some time to explore. Wycoller Hall is associated with Charlotte Bronte and believed to be Ferndean Manor in her novel 'Jane Eyre'. The Barn is now used as the Information Centre, but is not always open. The walk continues through the village and returns up to the car park along the road.

Alan R

Tea in Witch Country

This is an account of the ramble walked on 9th June 1979, as written by Tom Johnstone, for an article to appear in Lancashire Evening Telegraph. Tom was a past Treasurer of the Class, a Vice President and walks leader for many years who sadly passed away in 2018.

Fifteen adults and one youngster took part in Spring Vale Rambling Class's latest outing from Sabden back to Sabden. Leaving the car park at Sabden on a dull cloudy, but warm day the ramblers took the farm track along the Sabden valley to Dean Farm and then by field paths to enter the quiet hamlet of Sabden Fold. The valley is a dairy farming area bounded on the south side by Padiham Heights and on the north by Pendle Hill and the moors.

Leaving the hamlet we took the field path on the right through meadow and pasture passing the farms of Cappers, Bull Hole and Moss End and then a climb slowly to the village of Newchurch in Pendle witch country where tea was taken.

After our refreshments and rest we took the short steep field path out of the village to climb on to Saddlers Heights, overlooking Ogden Clough and the reservoir and in the background Pendle Hill. The view is one which we do not see very often and reminds you of Scotland. We continued our ramble over Drivers Height finally dropping down to Stainscombe to follow the path to Ratten Clough Farm and Churn Clough reservoir. The path took us around the banks of the secluded reservoir and we climbed Calf Hill to the Nick of Pendle before dropping down by field paths to Higher Whins and Sabden Village.

After another enjoyable day in the country, the party arrived home in Darwen at about 7.45 pm



A Storm on the Moor

by Terry Watkins

How dark the sky with lowered brow
Frowning over rugged stone
How fierce the wind upon my face
As I walk the moor alone.

How swiftly the satanic clouds
Descend on either hand
How violently the thunder shakes
The earth on which I stand.

How sudden comes the deluge
To drench me where I cower
With covered head, in mortal dread
Of such unbridled power.

How long the song of wind and rain
Assails and stings the ears
How passionate the dervish dance
Of the lightning spears.

How welcome then that glimpse of light
Through the cloaking grey
As the mantle's trailing hem
Is slowly drawn away.

How joyously the sun casts off the mask
Recalcitrantly worn
As a rainbow in the dale below
Declares the world reborn.



Photo by Pea Jenkins

Watch your Step

Walks do not always go to plan – accidents can and do happen, especially when you recce a new walk for the first time.

I have tripped on paths enclosed by tall ferns and bracken and lost my glasses. Sitting on the edge of a drystone wall to ease myself down from an awkward stile I have ended up face down in weeds and nettles with stones all around me. Falling face forward on the muddiest stretch of a walk seems to be a favourite as I have done this more times than I can recall. My least favourite obstacle is a stile where the ‘two-step’ is missing because you need good balance skills and the technique of a hurdler to get over the fence.

Uphill can take your breath away but downhill can be an adventure. I have often resorted to sitting down and slithering ungainly on a particularly steep and slippery terrain. If the terrain is steep and rocky, I resort to using my hands and knees to crawl up rocks. Scrambling is the milder form of climbing and is somewhere between a hike and technical rock climbing. Squeezing down narrow gullies I have held my breath in case I got stuck and pushed my rucksack and pole ahead of me.



My hands have been cut and scratched as I have crossed over wet limestone pavements and reached out to grab a shrub or tree to save myself. Snow is lovely and creates a winter wonderland, but it conceals the terrain beneath. I am the first to don the gaiters to keep the snow out of my boots and I have tried three types of snow and ice grips (traction cleats or boot crampons) with many a slippery slide until I finally found a pair that really do

keep me upright. Well, most of the time...

On a December recce with Tony Culverhouse mist and fog were encountered. It was an eight miles with 100m of visibility. The actual walk was a revelation because we got to see all the details, interesting features, and panoramas on a sunny January day. It was a cloudless sky but with lots of icy patches due to the low temperature of the previous night. They looked like puddles until you stepped on them!

Open access land and boggy patches that need to be circumnavigated can take you way off course. Compass and map are always carried on a moorland recce. Walking poles have certainly saved what could have been my embarrassing moments but sometimes you need spikes and sometimes you need rubber tips and you always need poles with snow/mud baskets, if you are walking in the North West!

Boots – I have almost lost one of mine as I have sunk deeper into mud. Check the track on heels and soles and trust your boots. You will walk with more confidence.

Occasionally the original walk route has been adapted, after a second visit, so that the route we lead is safer for our fellow ramblers. At SVRC we take our walk leading seriously and endeavour to keep you safe but on rare occasions the weather between a recce and the led walk or the weather on the day can affect the terrain and take us by surprise! We will have a Plan B and keep an escape route in mind.

Come prepared! We guarantee fun and good company, but anything can happen no matter how much we plan...



Barbara S