

Ramblers Gems

A Spring Vale Rambling Class Publication

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 Teddy Bears Picnic
- 2 Swallow, Swift or Martin?
- 3 The Grane Water World
- 4 A Roddlesworth Sunset
- 5 River Lune Escapade

Teddy Bears Picnic



*“If you go down to the woods today you’re sure of a big surprise.
If you go down in the woods today, you’d better go in disguise
For every bear that ever there was will gather there for certain
Because today’s the day the teddy bears have their picnic”*

This is the opening verse to the popular children’s song. The melody is by American composer John Walter Bratton, written in 1907, with the lyrics added by Irish songwriter Jimmy Kennedy in 1932.

This was also the theme to one of Spring Vale Rambling Class’s walks to celebrate the millennium year of 2000. It was arranged that members would assemble at Balderstone School bringing with them an item of food, either a savoury dish or a sweet dish. The members were also asked to bring along their favourite childhood teddy bear or to borrow one from a child or grandchild. Food was collected and the teddy bears were gently removed temporarily from their owners to be transported down to the picnic area. The 5 mile walk would have been just too much for them to undertake.

The walkers headed off across field paths towards Osbaldeston Green and then onto Park Gate. The route then followed the lane leading close to Oxendale Hall and then onto Osbaldeston Hall on the banks of the River Ribble. Field paths were again followed to reach Dobridding Wood and then it was only a short distance to arrive at the picnic site. It had been arranged that the picnic would take place in the grounds of Sunderland Hall Farm by kind permission of Colin and Lorraine Taylor.

On our arrival at the farm we were greeted by a resplendent display of all our food laid out on trestle tables borrowed from the local church hall. The teddy bears had also been suitably arranged and were eager to be reunited with their owners. Tea, coffee and fruit juices were available and our whole party sat down on rugs laid on the grass to enjoy the feast. We were pleased that the weather had been fine and we were able to enjoy the afternoon in the sunshine feasting on a magnificent banquet.

After the meal the ramblers sauntered happily up the lane to eventually arrive back at the start point.

Michael C

Swallow, Swift or Martin?

One of the most familiar sounds of summer evenings must be the screeching of Swifts around the roof tops. They nest in cavities in such places as churches and old barns. It is their screeching, combined with their all black colouring, which distinguishes them from the similar looking House Martin.



Swift

Although they belong in separate families, they both inhabit urban areas. In fact, when you watch a House Martin flying in a street, recognised by a white belly and a conspicuous white band in front of the tail and follow its fluttering and gliding flight, you may well see it disappear into a mud nest under the house eaves, usually one of many birds nesting in close proximity.



House Martin

A closely related species found alongside rivers is the Sand Martin which nests in holes in vertical river banks. Sand Martins have a brownish colouring, in contrast to the House Martins blackish blue.



Sand Martins on a river banking

Also found in rural settings is the similar looking Swallow, usually seen skimming along fields. Its most recognisable feature is the long tail streamers, though the bird also has a pale underside and less obvious reddish dark patches. It nests in barns and other farm building (and famously in the visitor centre in Downham.)



Swallow on a wire

All four birds are summer visitors to Britain, the Swift being the first to leave around mid August. The Swallow is usually the last as it often manages to raise 3 broods before heading back south. So although they look similar, if you look for these small differences, combined with where you these them, you should begin to tell them apart.

Good luck in your spotting.

Tony C

The Grane – Water World

We regularly walk within the Grane Road area, but have you ever wondered why these reservoirs were built here and how they were developed and extended over time.

Water was needed for industrial use and as drinking water for the growing nearby 'cotton towns'. A group of manufacturers considered sites and the first reservoir in the chain, Holden Wood was completed in 1841. To be able to supply Bury and district with drinking water the Calf Hey reservoir was constructed, but following a partial collapse in 1856 it was finally completed in 1860. A large support buttress of rock, visible today as a large grassy shelf on the downstream side of the dam, was added to support this failure.



Ogden Reservoir

From this point on, the valley succumbed to the power of the various water authorities, together with the migration of workers to urban centres. The maximum population of the Grane valley was about 1500 in the mid 1850s. Land was purchased by the water boards, further reducing the farmland available to already leased farms. During the second half of the 19th C the threat of diseases such as Typhoid and Cholera, from contaminated drinking water was confirmed by scientific research. This accelerated the removal and demolition of the habitations within water catchment areas. No one seemed concerned about the thousands of sheep roaming the catchment moors! A third reservoir, the middle one, Ogden, was constructed between 1902 and 1912. As with Calf Hey, stabilisation work was needed.

Thus the whole valley floor for around 2 miles was a chain of three reservoirs. Calf Hey and Ogden supply drinking water. Holden Wood is now a 'compensation' reservoir to ensure that Ogden Brook flows onward to meet the River Irwell. The other two reservoirs supply raw water into Haslingden Grane Water Treatment Works located on the northern hillside downstream of the Ogden dam.



Holden Wood Compensation Reservoir

There were now no longer any cotton mills in the Grane valley. Symbolically, in 1925, St Stephens Church once the most visible building in Grane village was closed. In 1926 it was moved stone by marked stone, to Three Lane Ends, where it is now the Holden Wood Antiques and Cafe Restaurant. Here it now serves as a permanent memorial to the valley which died.



An old Water Shut-off Valve

Alan R

A Roddlesworth Sunset

This walk is a popular 3 mile evening ramble that Spring Vale Ramblers undertake in the summer months as it can be easily walked during the remaining daylight hours and can offer a magnificent view of a coastal sunset if conditions are right. We start from the car park at Vaughn's Café Tockholes. The pond on the left is all that remains of evidence of a mill lodge; this was a site of a cotton mill. Look out in this area for the commemorative benches to Brian Lawrence, a President of the Class for many years.

Leave the car park to follow the route to the Tower that passes to the side of Hollinshead Terrace built as mill workers houses. The view to the left looks down onto Earnsdale Reservoir, Darwen's Winter Hill and the Golf Course, with the urban sprawl of Blackburn behind. The great mass of Pendle Hill forms the backdrop and the Nick of Pendle clearly stands out.

When you reach the gate into Stepback Plantation, take the gate immediately on the right to follow the route of the bridleway towards New Barn Farm. Follow this track across rough moorland until you reach the path coming down from the left off the moors. Walk downhill here, with Great Hill and the bleak expanse of Withnell Moor directly ahead, until the main Tockholes Road is reached. If the conditions are right the sunsets from this point are breathtaking. The route goes directly across the road, to enter the plantation, now take the left hand path and follow the woodland trail down through the plantation to arrive at the ruins of Hollinshead Hall.

Hollinshead Hall was the Manor House to the village of Tockholes. The ruins that remain date to the 18th and 19th century, but evidence exists to suggest that the Hollinshead family owned a manor house in the area back in the 14th century. In 1845 the Hall was sold to Darwen mill owner Eccles Shorrocks, but by the end of the century the building had fallen into disrepair and eventually had to be demolished. In the corner of the grassed area is the only standing building left on the site. This is the Well House. It is difficult to date this building as there is little documented evidence. It is suggested that the structure may date from when alterations were carried out to the Hall in the late 18th century. Within the building there is a water spout in the shape of a lion's head, the water coming from five local springs sited behind the Well House. Another popular theory is that the building houses a holy spring

or is a magic wishing well. There are many local stories about strange happenings at the well.

After exploring the Hall retrace your steps back towards the stone gate posts and continue following the track around to the right to start the climb up the hill. This track is the route of the old coach road, running between Chorley and Bolton before the new turnpike road was built. Once at the top pass through the gate and continue straight on, following the route back down into the plantations. Roddlesworth Plantation was established in 1904 by Liverpool Corporation Water Works as a means of preventing soil erosion after the construction of the reservoirs in the valley below. These woodlands are unique by the fact they are the largest area of broadleaf trees in Lancashire. The trees are predominately oak, ash, beech, alder with only a few pines. The old walls still mark out the field boundaries and scattered amongst the trees are the ruins of several farms that were abandoned to allow for the construction of the reservoirs.



As the route progresses downhill the stream on the left is known as Rocky Brook. A popular picnic spot is by Halliwell Fold Bridge and during the summer months generations of children have paddled and fished in the brooks ice cold waters.

Once at the bridge keep to the right hand side, go through the gate to continue up the lane, passing old stone gate posts. After about 500 metres the track starts to level out, but now take a sharp right hand turn to follow the path on a well surfaced track that does eventually revert back to a grassy footpath. The footpath now starts to climb the hill and as it nears the brow, levels out to join a wide walled track, running under a canopy of large beech trees. This route eventually arrives back onto Tockholes Road and the start point by the Café

Michael C

River Lune Escapade

I have completed this circular river walk before so I set off on my own one Saturday in January, on my own because my companion had pulled out at 09.00 that very morning, to arrive at Devil's Bridge on the outskirts of Kirby Lonsdale. I checked with local walkers and the people in the bacon butty van to see if there were any issues along the River Lune! There was nothing to report and no warning posters. I headed south to climb up to Woodend where I met a local farmer. We chatted about my route, map, gps, and two mobile phones until he was happy about my lone walking. No mention of any issues along my route.

I made it downhill via the very wet, slippery and stony path to reach Sellet Mill and the sunken Hosticle Lane and onto Whittington. Checking out the huge porch, seats and steps at St Michael's Church I counted enough seating for about 16 people (no social distancing back then) for a lunch stop. My route continued on through the village I noted the pub had closed down. I tried walking down Coneygarth Lane, but turned back because of huge deep puddles. Retracing my steps I took my usual circuit down Burrow Mill Lane and it was much drier under foot. A thought struck me as I reached the River Lune. *'I thought the fisherman's hut was on my left but I must be mistaken as it is on my right'*. I turned left here with no problems along the river footpath. When I reached my only escape route to the B6254 I continued ahead enjoying the sunshine and wildlife the river had to offer.



St Michael's Church viewed from the south.

A little further along I met a farmer repairing a stile and asked if he knew of any issues getting back to Devil's Bridge and he said, "None". At this point I could have retraced my steps to the aforementioned escape route!

I carried on across the fields and more stiles until I met a hedgerow blocking my way and where I remembered I turned right and then left over a stile, and onwards along the path. No stile but only two upright poles where the stile used to be. I am on the sandy banking at the riverside but where has the path gone? I searched but no sign of it ahead or going back up to the fence line path. I discovered it had been washed away during high river levels.

Then I notice the path was now well above my 5ft 2" height and there was no longer a way up to the path. It was time to assess the situation and way up the risks. Sunset would be just after 4pm, the sun had gone behind the clouds and the temperature was dropping. Not enough time to go back and risk walking along the busy B6254 in fading light.

I was on a nice soft sandy bank that would break my fall. I was 6ft away from the fast moving Lune. I could see the footpath up above, along the fence line, and away from the river. I was 4.5 miles into a 5.25 mile 'D' walk. I swung on some exposed hedgerow roots and they seem very secure. The only way was to scramble up and onto the footpath. Up went the rucksack then the walking pole and with an adrenalin rush and determination I made it up at the first attempt.

A bit shaken, breathless and muddy I sat on the footpath and realised this was no route for a party of D walkers, the walk was a week tomorrow... my first ever walk leading for North East Lancashire Coach Rambles!

From this point my way back to Devil's Bridge was, as described, 'lovely river walking'! I dashed into the Tourist Information Centre in Kirby Lonsdale and told them of my plight. The staff were apparently all aware of the footpath being washed away, so I asked why there were no warning posters. There was a lot of shrugging of shoulders, but no action. I just asked for circular walk leaflets and promptly returned to the car realising I would have to plot and recce another walk the next day!

Back at the car the mobile phone rang and it was Howard Ashworth to my rescue. But, what happened on that Sunday and was there a second hazard? Next instalment coming soon...

Barbara S



The Fishing Hut on the River Lune, Whittington when it was on the left of the track!



The remains of the Fishing Hut after the storm... Last time I saw it was when it was on the right...



Devils Bridge across the River Lune at Kirkby Lonsdale