

Ramblers Gems



A Spring Vale Rambling Class Publication

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Wildlife on our Doorstep

Did you know that 80% of Lancashire is rural? With 354 recorded bird species, native mammals such as red deer and otters, and millions of creepy crawlies that include tiger moths and the common lizard.

With the lockdown much of the countryside has been able to recover and wildlife is flourishing. Birds and animal have been mainly left undisturbed and have being able to raise their young without hindrance.



There is an abundance of smaller rodents such as field mice and voles, producing a knock-on effect to the animals higher up in the food chain. Birds like the kestrel and short eared owl have been able to successfully raise a larger number of chicks just because of the abundance of food.

Larger herds of deer have been spotted on the high ground and hiding in small woodland.



Even the exceedingly rare and timid Lancashire zebra is making a comeback feeding on bracken and has been observed by some members of our rambling class.



Photo by Julie C

The Road goes on

When I am out walking in the beautiful countryside and I start to slow, and my thoughts start to wander from the task in hand the following earworm always comes to mind.

*“The Road goes ever on and on
Down from the door where it began.
Now far ahead the Road has gone,
And I must follow, if I can,*

*Pursuing it with eager feet,
Until it joins some larger way
Where many paths and errands meet.
And whither then? I cannot say”*

J.R.R. Tolkien

There are three versions of this walking song in The Lord of the Rings. It is first sung by Bilbo when he leaves the Shire to set off to visit Rivendell.



Jane C

Lime Kilns of Yorkshire

When you walk between Settle and Stainforth, but not along the riverside path, you will stumble across the most impressive lime kiln in the Yorkshire Dales.

Many people are not aware that this kiln exists but don't think of it as a kiln in the usual small pottery sense - this is a vast feat of engineering, with interpretation panels to explain how it all functioned. Venturing inside the archways you will instantly experience the eerie damp darkness of the huge tunnel. This incredible structure was built in 1873 for the Craven Lime Company using a patented system created by a German inventor to burn lime. It is known as a Hoffmann Kiln and is a process where limestone is burned continuously in a circuit around the kiln which took an average of six weeks for one whole circuit.



Limestone blocks from the nearby quarry were barrowed in and carefully stacked by hand in the burning chamber. Coal was mixed in, and once lit, a complicated flue system allowed the heat and speed of the burn around the kiln to be carefully regulated. As one chamber burned, waste heat warmed limestone blocks in the next two or three chambers. Behind the burning zone, two or three chambers were left to cool down before the lime could be shovelled out and loaded onto railway wagons waiting in the sidings beside the kiln.

This place is well worth your time to explore further either when you are on the walk or just visiting the area around Settle. Access to the car park is off the main Settle to Horton in Ribblesdale Rd at Lancliffe. Turn right at the Fairhurst Stone Merchants site and go under the railway to reach the car park.

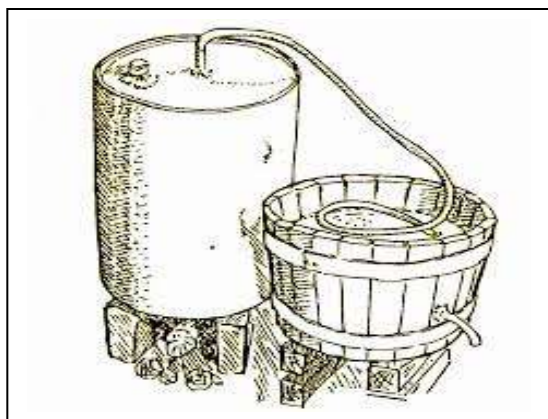
Michael C

The Characters and Whisky Spinners of the Grane

A relatively remote and self-contained valley such as Grane, produced its share of characters, traditions and legends. It may have been a part of Haslingden, but many people regarded it as 'a place apart.' In fact, for many years there has been a Grane Residents Association, which is still active. Currently they are fighting a proposed development of 165 houses to be built on fields to the rear of the Holden Arms.

One of the greatest eccentrics 'Old Andrey', Andrew Scholes, lived at Top O'th Knoll, the ruins of which can be found on the Rossendale Way above Grane Head. On May Day 1880, people from miles around visited Old Andrey, the reason? He had built a farm cart in his parlour, but it was too large to fit through the outside door. Andrey was reluctant to dismantle the cart, or widen the door, so the cart remained, propped up against a wall in his lounge. He lived on his own there for 50 years, and there were others who chose the Grane as a place for solitude, or to shun society.

Oral tradition backed by hard evidence (literally, in Court proceedings) tells of the 'whisky spinners' of Grane. Illicit distillation of whisky was a welcome supplement to earnings from farm and loom, with the consumption of the same, giving a welcome relief during the bleak winter months.



Haslingden Grane was not unique in illegal whisky distillation, as many remote areas in the 1800s were ideal places to set up concealed stills. However, there are a few stories originating in the Grane Valley. A newly built farm at Pike Low had a secret still room built into it. Often stills were

concealed behind a fireplace, with the extra chimney that the flue needed, connected directly into the brickwork of the main fire chimney.

Distilling became so extensive in the valley, that an excise officer was based in Haslingden for some years, but he was conspicuously unsuccessful!

Allegedly, whisky was delivered to a Haslingden hostelry using a hollow metal saddle concealed beneath bales of woven cloth on a pony. A man at Haslingden Fair was found to be wearing a hollow metal waistcoat containing Grane whisky. The quarrymen working on Musbury Heights were refreshed by the bucket-load. Court cases between 1850 and 1880 were very often the result of tip-offs from informants, sometimes jealous neighbouring farmers!

Bentley House, now a ruin in the woods above Calf Hey reservoir, was the scene of one such raid. The farmer involved was fined £10 and had to sell some cattle, but still spent some time in prison. Some years later the farmer at Pike Low (where the still room was installed when the farm was built) was fined £230 and had to sell the property and all his equipment and stock. The informant in this case was the wife of the Bentley House farmer!

Lately, the farmer from Pike Low moved to Grane village and worked as an engineer at Calf Hey Mill. When the Mill was demolished in 1910 before the advancing waters of Ogden reservoir, a complete whisky still was found in the mill engine house. Surely not a coincidence?'

There are many tales of 'poteen' 'poitin' or 'potheen' in Ireland & Scotland, but Lancashire tales are few. It is said that there are still one or two elderly folks in Haslingden Grane, who claim to have had, as children, a taste of the illicit and potent, '*water of life*' of the Grane.



Alan R

Historic Halls and Villages

This is a report on the walk undertaken by Spring Vale Rambling Class on Saturday 5th April 1933. The article was printed in the Darwen News. Although small sections may have altered many of the places are recognisable and this route can still be walked today.

“Rambling is a most beneficial hobby from a health standpoint, and interesting lessons that one may glean from a study of plant, bird and insect life that abound in hedge, coppice and by the stream side. With these objects in view, the Spring Vale Rambling Class was inaugurated in 1896 and last Saturday they commenced the 38th season with a ramble from Lower Darwen to Blackburn touching Guide, Peel Fold, Cowhill Fold, Rishton, Tottleworth, Great Harwood, Lower Cuncliff and Little Harwood. The weather was splendid as a party boarded the Ribble bus in Railway Rd the company having sent a duplicate bus which came in very useful as about 50 were waiting, and others were picked up on the way to Lower Darwen. When we disembarked at Guide we totalled 63.

The journey was commenced down the road until we came to a few houses on the left hand side of the road one of these having been at one time a beer shop known as ‘The Cross Guns’. Opposite here is the field where Prince George landed by aeroplane on his visit to Darwen to open the new baths on 29th.March 1933. We went to the opening and by the pens, alongside the field. Resuming we came to Lower Darwen Colliery known to collier’s in the Sough and Bolton Road districts as Lol ‘ole Pit. Going by the shale heaps, the party followed the stream which was the commencement of Knuzden Brook, this later becoming the Blakewater.



The Lol'ole Pit Head at Guide

Crossing the stream the first stile on the right was taken and then the party went up through the allotments these being chiefly now hen pens and finally came to Garsden Ave. Crossing the Blackburn Haslingden Rd we followed the lane to Warcock Green Farm with London Smoke on the right. Taking the stile on the right we entered Moss Lane near Kitchen Row. Opposite here we heard the yelping of dogs on Stanhill dog coursing track. Crossing the road leading to Stanhill we came to the quarry above Peel Fold. Here is a fine example of a residence of the Tudor period, once known as Oldham's Cross, but one of the Oldham's married a Peel and thus it became a residence of the Peel family and known as Peel Fold. In the early 18th century one of Peels was a woollen manufacturer. Then came William Peel, his grandson who was Robert Peel senior. It was son Robert junior who became Prime Minister of England. William was a noted block calico printer, and in 1762 he became associated with James Hargreaves of Stanhill the inventor of “The Spinning Jenny.” He had his machinery destroyed by a mob from Blackburn in 1768.



Peel Fold at the time of the ramble

Passing behind the old building the ramblers went down the fields and came onto Blackburn Accrington Rd just above the Mother Red Cap. Crossing the road by the petrol pump station they went across Cow Hill Moss and soon reached a cluster of old buildings comprising Cow Hill Fold . Here are three fine old blocks with million windows. Mention is made of one Adam, son of Richard de Cowhill in 1284, having some of his land taken from him. The three mansions were inhabited in the 16th century by members of the, Hindle and Whalley families.

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The Talbots were a powerful family their chief place of residence being Bashall Hall. They also owned and resided at Salesbury Hall, Dinckley Hall and Fairhurst at Lower Darwen. The Hindles were freeholders of Cowhill and Tottleworth. The Whalley family possessed or rented property at Livesey and Tockholes. The land about Cow Hill was then of the nature of moorland and much covered with rushes, from this you get the name rush town – Rishton. On these moors several sports such as bull baiting and cock fighting took place. Passing by the side of these buildings we went through Willis Farm across the field towards Moorside Farm, but on entering the lane we went to the left and came in the Blackburn Rishton Rd at the War Memorial. Following the main road we went by the church along High Street over the canal to the Hermitage. Turning left here up Holt Street we soon reached the Holt now a farmhouse.

On this spot once stood a strongly fortified hall in the possession of one of the Talbot. It is said to have had a moat and a drawbridge indicated by the hollow nearby. It was attacked several times during the Wars of the Roses. An Edmund Talbot lived here and on his death his widow married a Stanley, a brother of the Earl of Derby. The Rishton family resided here for a long period and Dame Stanley was embittered against them for some reason or other. Her daughter fell in love with one of them and married him, but her mother had her taken to Great Harwood church and married her to another branch of the Rishton family.

Continuing the ramble, the party left the old farm, enter the lane and going to the left were soon in the quaint village of Tottleworth having covered 5¹/₄ miles. Tottleworth is a typical example of old



Tottleworth Village

English village it has no definite shape, no streets, the houses being built haphazard at various levels and is entered by two old tracks, chief being the one along which the ramblers walked. The houses are of 16th, 17th and 18th century type. Some quaint old characters have lived in this old village. One old man who had a shop was illiterate and marked the dealings of his customers by signs on a door. It is said he would take the door to court to prove a case. It is also said that there was only one tall hat which was handed round.

After good friends had supplied the party with tea we left the old village by what is known as “Dow-Pad” and came to the highway. Going to the right we passed the football ground and entered Great Harwood Cemetery to pay our respects to the memory of our late leader Mr J.T. Fielding. Gathering around his grave the ramblers sang two hymns to the tune of “Rimington” and “Lead Kindly Light” which were among his favourite tunes.

Carrying the memory of our old Leader with us we retraced our steps to the Cemetery Hotel better known as Lidgett. Going by the side of the hotel we passed Hawthorne Place and entered the fields, following the stream for a short distance and then crossed it. Then by way of the fence side to re-cross it a little higher up. Going up the fence side to a cinder path, here, we went to the left and came onto the road, up which we proceeded until reaching and going through the first stile on the left. We kept to the track below Close Brow quarry, passing Dunsca Farm, and then came to Lower Cunliffe Farm. A brutal murder was recalled. It was near this farm that part of the body of Emily Holland who was cruelly murdered by Fish the barber in March 1876, was found.

Keeping almost straight we came to the canal side, our footpath keeping on the top and passing the Queen brickworks. Going along by Lower Side Beet Farm, and over the railway. We went between the railway and the canal to Green Head Farm, later re crossing the railway and the Arterial Rd down the lane by the Wesleyan Chapel to Whalley Old Rd Little Harwood. Proceeding along we passed the Little Harwood War Memorial with its clock face lit up and went along Plane St to Bastwell, where we boarded the car feeling a little tired but having enjoyed our 10 ¹/₄ miles of varied country and among historical halls and villages.“

Transcribed by Michael C