

Ramblers Gems



A Spring Vale Rambling Class Publication

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In Praise of the Lancashire Countryside

The Lancashire countryside is rather brill,
Think Rivington Pike and Pendle Hill.
Darwen Moor and Sunnyhurst Woods
Definitely do deliver the goods.
Fairsnape, Parlick and Bowland Fell
Are always sure to go down well.
The Rivers Ribble, Lune and Hodder
Provide some perfect fodder.
So, whatever the weather, wander at will,
And the Lancashire countryside will give you a thrill!

Pendle Hill

*“Old Pendle, Old Pendle thou standest alone.
Twixt Burnley and Clitheroe, Whalley and Colne
Where Hodder and Ribbles fair waters do meet
With Barley and Downham content at thy feet”*

This is the opening verse of the popular Lancashire folk song that sings of the praises of the beauty of our countryside. Its brooding massif rears up over the surrounding land, its form dominates the landscape for miles around, this whaleback hump of gnarly millstone grit is Pendle Hill.

Standing at 1,827ft (557m) high, Pendle Hill not only casts its shadow over the countryside, it also exerts a great influence over the weather. There is a marked difference in the amount of rainfall recorded on the eastern and western slopes. Passing over the hill the clouds are encouraged to release their rain. The result is rich grazing land in the Ribble Valley. The hill's moods change with the weather. In sunshine, it slumbers contentedly – a gentle guardian of the villages and hamlets nestling at its foot. But with the advent of the Autumn chill, it assumes an altogether more imposing profile. Often, while the valley floor is clear, the Big End to the north east has a covering of mist and a frosting of ice.



A Photography Quiz

It seems a while since I did the photography quiz for a SVRC AGM so I thought I would do one for Ramblers Gems!
Two points for each correct answer. One for naming the feature and one for identifying the location.
And, for an extra point – who had a birthday on Walk 7? No prize just for fun.

<p>1.</p> 	<p>2.</p> 	<p>3.</p> 
<p>4.</p> 	<p>5.</p> 	<p>6.</p> 
<p>7.</p> 	<p>8.</p> 	<p>9.</p> 
<p>10.</p> 	<p>11.</p> 	<p>12.</p> 
<p>13.</p> 	<p>14.</p> 	<p>15.</p> 

Good luck. Answers in the next edition.
Barbara S

The Norber Erratics

Norber Erratic, say it again, let it roll round your tongue – Norber Erratics. Now it may sound like a character dreamed up by Ronnie Barker, but as we know, that isn't the truth. The Norber Erratics, found strewn over Nappa Scar near Austwick are a geologist delight and a favourite area for ramblers. The term erratic simply means something in the wrong place, e.g. an erratic heart rate means it isn't beating normally. So the Norber erratics are rocks in the wrong place. In the words of Talking Heads - how did they get there?

The erratics are hard sandstone boulders, formed during the Silurian period, over 450 million years ago and were subsequently covered by Carbonaceous limestone 100 million years later. Is your mind blown yet?

Fast forward to the most recent ice age, between 20,000 and 70,000 years ago and the Yorkshire Dales is under a huge glacier. This glacier pushed its way south carving out Ribblesdale, picking up and transporting material in its wake, including the sandstone boulders, which come from about 1 mile away in Crummackdale. As early as 17,000 years ago the climate begins to warm up and the glacier retreats leaving the boulders stranded on the hillside at Nappa, sitting on top of the younger limestone bedrock.



The erratics don't just sit on the limestone but many are on pedestals of limestone, called perched erratics with some of the pedestals up to 30 cm in height. Many scientists have studied the area and tried to estimate the rate of limestone dissolution and one theory suggests that limestone dissolves at about 20 micrometres per year – which is rapid in geology terms.

This area of the Yorkshire Dales is home to a variety of geological formations and is always well worth a visit.

Jane C

Winners and Losers

When did you last see a kestrel hovering over a motorway verge?

Up until a few years ago it used to be a common sight in this location, now it's becoming rare as kestrel numbers appear to be declining in this location. At the same time buzzards which used to be a rare sight, are becoming more common. Indeed, we often see buzzards on Spring Vale walks, in fact it's becoming unusual not to see them on one of our walks.

A similar situation has occurred in some local woods, particularly Sunnyhurst and Roddlesworth, involving wood warblers and nuthatches. Up until the late 1980's wood warblers were quite common in both of these areas. Nuthatches however, caused a flurry of interest among bird watches, if they were reported locally.



Wood Warbler

Now the situation has completely reversed. Wood warblers have disappeared from both Sunnyhurst and Roddlesworth woods, whereas nuthatches are everywhere. Both species have vastly different nesting habitats. Wood warblers nest on the ground among leaf litter, whereas the nuthatch nests in holes in trees.



Nuthatch

Tony C

Canals and Quarry Walk

This is a walk that we have undertaken on several occasions it is steeped in history and one that I find fascinating to explore. The walk starts at the layby on Whins Lane just off the A674 at Higher Wheelton. Walk down Whins Lane and take the footpath on the right just after Whins Green Kitchen and Spa. This path leads us down onto the Leeds Liverpool Canal where we turn right along the towpath in a southerly direction. The route passes Top Lock a favourite eating establishment and popular point on the canal system. We eventually reach the lock flight at Johnsons Hillock. This is the point where two canal systems meet, the Leeds Liverpool and the Lancaster canal and where we now follow the Lancaster canal route.



The start of the Lancaster Canal at Johnson's Hillock

Once over the bridge turn back to follow the towpath on this now disused canal. At the end of this short section, the canal ends, and we now join the road, turning left to follow Town Lane and under the M61 motorway. At the row of cottages on the right look out for the stile and footpath on the right that leads onto field paths. This path is now followed and heads up the valley through a wood which can be muddy under foot. A short diversion at a stile on the left leads to an old tunnel under the route of Lancaster Canal. Retrace your steps and continue up to join the hamlet at Hill Foot and Carwood lane.



Hill Foot Farm

The Carwood Lane footpath project is a local community initiative that helped to restore the path and research the local history surrounding the area. An interpretation board provides many interesting facts about the surrounding quarries and mills. When the canal was fully operational the whole area was a hive of activity with stone being quarried for millstones to be exported all over the world. Coal was brought in to feed the boilers of two weaving mills. The only remaining evidence of the canal are deep cuttings and stone parapets of the old bridges.

Continuing up the lane we eventually reach the gates to the disused quarry on the right. The footpath we now follow is on the left of the gates and leads through a wooded area, passing to the rear of houses. This section can also be muddy underfoot so take care. The path finally emerges on to Birchin Lane where we turn right to climb the hill to cross over the motorway bridge. A short diversion off to the left into Whittle Spinney leads to a modern cross erected to commemorate the site of St. Helens well. This holy well was both an important religious site and a vital source of water for this part of the village. Irish monks would make a pilgrimage to the site. The well disappeared under construction of the M61 motorway in 1968 and the new cross is as close as possible to the original site. Now return to climb the hill.



The new St Helens Cross

Once over the motorway bridge take the path on the left into the field and climb the hill and descend down the far side to the stile where the route now takes a sharp right turn to eventually arrive on the road at Denham Hill. Turn left here and follow the road and once the car park is reached take the footpath that will lead into the quarry area. This is Denham quarry and its spectacularly high rock face reveals the many layers that were laid down over millions of years to form the Millstone grits that these quarries were renowned for.

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Continuing along the path through the quarry we drop down onto the lane and proceed forward through the gate following the path until the well-constructed stone wall is reached. Turn right here and follow the wall down to reach the road. The wall and stone outlines in the field are all that remains of the once notorious Brindle Workhouse.



The workhouse was originally set up by the parish in the early 1700's, using a small, converted, catholic 'mass house' The number of paupers in the workhouse continued to expand and at its peak, housed between 200 and 300 paupers in harsh conditions. Brindle Workhouse soon gained a national reputation for taking cases than no one else would. It closed in 1871.

Continue over the road and onto the lane until it takes a sharp right turn, proceed straight on here onto field paths and the route drops down into the valley, eventually crossing a bridge, before the short climb up to the canal. At this point cross over the canal bridge and continue up the lane, through the farm to meet up with the main A674 road. Turn right here and after a few hundred metres the start point comes into view.

Michael C

Lead Mines Clough

Lead Mines Clough is in the Rivington area and is located around a mineral vein that has infilled along a geological fault line. The area was mined extensively in the past and there are obvious bell pits on the higher ground and the remains of the foundations of a mine pump powered by a water wheel that has been restored by volunteers. The brook flowing through the area cascades over several waterfalls and this has exposed quite large areas of rock bedding that gives the area a different look to its surroundings.

Within the area of the site there is a memorial to the crew of a Wellington Bomber that crashed into the hillside behind the clough killing all 6 crew members on board. The aircraft was based in Wymeswold in Leicestershire and was taking part in a "Bullseye" exercise when it got into difficulties in the early hours of the 16th November 1943. The night sky was clear, but the conditions were extremely cold and the minus 15 degrees caused mechanical problems that ultimately led to the accident.

The breakup of the aircraft started some way from the crash site with one of the engines being found in Darwen sometime after the accident. A stone pillar and plaque erected in 1955 by Horwich Rotary Club, is some way from the crash site, but is a fitting place to commemorate the tragic event.



Memorial to the crew of the crashed Wellington Bomber above Limestone Clough

Eleanor