

Ramblers Gems

A Spring Vale Rambling Class Publication

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125 and looking good

We are commemorating 125 years of a continuous walking season. The club had an extensive walks programme throughout both of the World Wars and was able to keep morale high on the home front by providing a much needed distraction in hard times. The first ramble was on 23rd May 1896 when ten gentlemen, led by local school teacher Mr J.T. Fielding set off on an organised walk into the local Darwen countryside. It was not until 1901 that ladies were allowed to attend the walks and then it would be only by invitation onto certain walks. Since 1917 all rambles have been open to ladies.



Who we are

Spring Vale Rambling Class is a walking club emanating from the Lancashire town of Darwen. We enjoy rambling in the beautiful countryside within North East Lancashire and the Ribble Valley. The original aims of the Class were to provide Historical, Botanical, Scenical and Geological Rambles and this is the ethos that still applies today. Originally the ramblers would walk on a Saturday afternoon after the mornings work. They would collect items and then study and discuss their findings during the following weeks.

Mr J.T. Fielding led all the rambles published from 1896 to 1930 until his retirement when this duty was taken over by Mr J Kershaw, a duty which he carried out from 1932 until 1965.

Mr Fielding was also the Secretary of the Class from 1909 to 1930 and was succeeded by Mr David Tattersall (1931 to 1935), Mr Arthur Clapham (1936 to 1953), Mr W Moss (1954 to 1962), Mr Vincent Lightbown (1963 to 1969) Miss Glenda Brindle has been Secretary since 1970.

Since 1931 there has only been six Presidents of the Class. Mr David Tattersall in 1931, Mr J R Jepson (1932 to 1944), Mrs E Lord (1946 to 1958), Mr John Tattersall (1959 to 1974), Mr Brian Lawrence (1975 to 1995). Michael COUNTER became President of the Class in 1996, following the sudden death of Brian.

This photograph was taken by Alan S at the start of the new season when the 6 mile walk commenced from the Information Centre Sunnyhurst Woods Darwen with members of the Class dressed in period Victorian costume. We were accompanied by the Mayor of Darwen Lilian Salter.

Lockdown Musings

Am I the only one who is enjoying, in a weird way, this quieter, gentler pace of life? Of course I am missing my family and friends, but the pay off after weeks of less traffic and slower pace is all around. I am sure the birds are singing louder and longer, the skies are bluer with hardly any vapour trails to be seen, the clouds fluffier and the sounds of nature are all around – lambs of course and the hum of farm machinery and bees are everywhere.

Like everyone else walks from the front door have been the order of the day for the past 7 weeks, and even with the slight easing of restrictions I do not think I will be driving any distances to walk. So – walking from the front door for 7 weeks, that was a challenge in itself. How to avoid walking the same routes over and over again? How many times have you noticed a footpath sign, or a footpath on the map and thought “I wonder where that goes?” or “Next time I will investigate along there?”. Well now is the time to do it. Following a few online chats with Michael I decided to take the plunge and bought a new GPS system.

As an aside – there are some great deals out in internet land at the moment. For example – Mountain Warehouse have an up to 70% off sale, Craghoppers have a deal of the week and some discounted clothing, Regatta had 50% off some items, while Rohan has a reduction of their linen trousers. Gaynors of Ambleside has a variety of discounts so if you are in the mood for some on line therapy there is plenty to browse through.

However I digress - SatMap were offering 30% discount on all GPS systems, so as my old Active10 was exactly that, old and battered I upgraded to the platinum model. It does everything bar bring me a cup of tea in bed in the morning. This has become my new best friend as I walk new to me paths in the Hoddlesden, Belthorn and Cranberry areas. I would have been leading the Tuesday night Hoddlesden walk soon, which of course is now cancelled but the flip side of this, is that by the time we are all walking in this area again, I will have a whole load of new routes.

One way of making a regular walk seem a bit more interesting I found, was to stop and take more interest in the things that I would normally stomp past. In this way I rediscovered when Blacksnape playing fields

were opened – July 1st 1932. I also stopped more to take photos of things that amuse or interested me, as anyone on FaceBook will testify. I particularly like how the light streams and the colour of the lichen on the wall and the contrast between the colour of the wall, tree and footpath post as on this photo.



I also have a “thing” about old stone gate posts.



I should take this time to learn more about bird song and nature as I am no Alan R, Michael, Barbara or Tony who can all point out birds, flora and fauna with such ease and knowledge. I intend to sort out my many walking routes so I will be ready when we can all walk again. But you know what they say about good intentions!!

Missing my rambling buddies, keep safe everyone.

Jane

Quaint Village Customs

Originally written by Mr Stephen Clarke of Clitheroe and was published in "The Rambler 1905"

Formerly in Grindleton on the second Tuesday in June, the "Henpecked Club" held its annual demonstration and fete. This was a notable occasion of much mirth and frivolity. The club assembled at the "Duke of York" and the "Buck" Hotels in alternate years. The members assembled and usually did ample justice to a sumptuous dinner, on the conclusion of which they mustered in procession and perambulated the village lanes and semi-streets to the lively strains of music, provided by a local brass band. The roads were always lined with eager sight-seers, who were immensely tickled with the grotesque characters forming the procession. It was somewhat of a puzzle to identify some of the characters under their disguise. While processioning, each hen-pecked one tried to demonstrate, either by action or dress, the particular manner in which he played second fiddle at home. Some would assume plasters over discoloured eyes, presumably the result of "Home Rule." Others would hobble about as disabled whilst another son of the club sported a mop or a scrubbing brush. A favourite role was that of stocking-darner or stocking-knitter. The whitewasher was also in evidence and the onlookers who did not attend strictly to themselves would receive the contents of the brush to the utmost delight of others. As a matter of course, a procession of this nature must show how nursing should be done, and even baking was represented by "the son of toil" carrying a rolling pin. No excuse was ever tolerated for non-appearance at this annual festival and it is recorded that several times some were ashamed to face the ordeal of this mock procession and betook themselves to bed, only to be dragged therefrom by their fellow members and forced to accept their share of the proceedings.

Dare we venture a revival of this comicality today?

Out and About

The bramble patch is good spot to look out for a passing white admiral that are partial to the blossoms, and are a favourite for the black, brown and white-letter hairstreaks. Many of the British butterfly species are in decline, but a handful of woodland butterflies are reversing this trend, including the silver-washed fritillary, white admiral, and speckled wood butterflies, which are all expanding their ranges.



Black Hairstreak Butterfly

Orchids are the superstars of the wild flower world. This summer, search for the masters of mimicry cleverly fooling their pollinators, including the furry-flowered bee orchid. When your path takes you deep in the woodland, look for the bizarre bird's-nest orchid growing in leaf litter; a parasite that steals its nutrients from the roots of trees, and has dispensed with the green chlorophyll that other plants use to make their food in favour of a creamy-brown colour all over.



Bee Orchid

A WALK TO THE TOWER

Walking Distance/Time 2.3 miles/ 2hours

Starting Point: Bold Venture Park Gates, Borough Road, Darwen

How to get there: Walk up Borough Road from Darwen Town Centre off the A666.

This walk is an essential must do for all those people who call themselves 'Darreners'. The first part of the walk passes through Bold Venture Park, a once disused quarry; now with a lake and picturesque waterfall. The middle section visits Darwen's most famous landmark the Tower. The Tower was built to celebrate Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1897 and to many local people it also celebrated the freeing of Darwen Moor in the previous year. The final section offers wonderful views of Sunnyhurst woods in all its summer glory.

The Walk

From the entrance gates leading into the park, follow the left hand gravelled path, keeping the war memorial on your right. The memorial was unveiled in 1921 in honour of the 1200 townsfolk of Darwen who gave their lives in the World War of 1914-18. The base has 5 steps symbolising the five long years of war. The path climbs gradually, curving around to the right and keeping within the park boundary. Keeps right, crossing the bridge with the 20 metre waterfall cascading down into the pool below. Once over the stream, bear to the left and take the first path off to the left after the stand of Yew trees crossing the Labyrinth., climbing stone steps that lead out of the park to cross Manor Road.

Continue through the gates into the upper section of Bold Venture Park. This is the less formal park and has been left to develop naturally. Several paths follow the stream up through the woods, but we will follow the right hand path. The path climbs steadily up through mature trees and rhododendrons passing a watchful wooden carving of an owl and a giant table and chair, to emerge at the kissing gate and exit from the park. Turn left and then right to follow the main track leading up on to the moors and the tower. The path now climbs up around an old quarry, from which stone was quarried to build many of the houses in Darwen. Take a welcome rest on the memorial bench dedicated to Eric Hatton, a local walker.

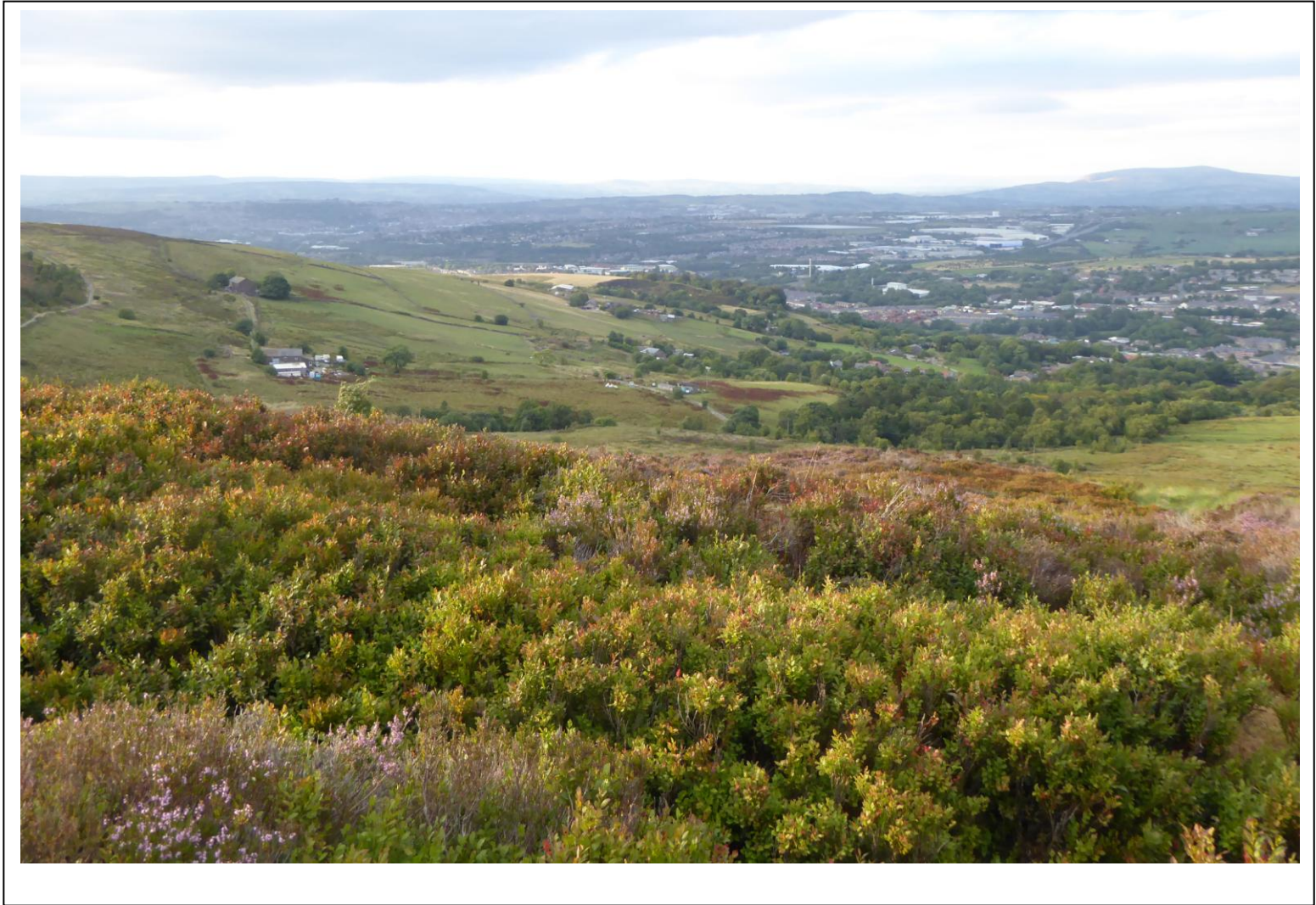
Continue on up and as the path levels off, a sweeping vista can be seen from the Sough area in the south, passing India Mill chimney, and the long straight road of Marsh House Lane leading up to Blacksnape and Hoddlesden. Continuing to pan to the left, the dome of the library and the angular structure of Darwen Aldridge Academy, in the town centre can now clearly be seen. The view ends with the sprawling conurbation of Blackburn in the North.

Once the top of the moor is reached and with the Tower in full view, keep going around to the left to meet the path coming up from Sunnyhurst. The final approach to the Tower is a steep ascent, but one worth the effort. No walker from Darwen should ever fail to climb the Tower at every visit. The view from the top has an extensive panoramic vista with the Bowland and Lakeland Fells visible on a clear day. Can you spot Blackpool Tower on the coastal skyline? The great whaleback mass of Pendle Hill is also prominent with the Nick clearly visible. The Yorkshire Three peaks are on the northern horizon.

If you have climbed the Tower, return to the white triangulation point and take the right hand path back down the hill to the first intersection. Keep on straight and down the left hand flank of the moor, following a Witton Weavers Way marker arrow. It is from this path that a bird's eye view of the whole of Darwen can be seen and the vibrant colours of Sunnyhurst Wood are at their best at this time of year. Once the metal gate is reached take the right hand path across the top of the old quarry. This lane is known as Turn Lane and leads us onto Pinfold, once a place where stray cattle from the moors would be penned up until reclaimed.

Keep right at the cottages, passing Robin Hood Cottage and straight on to follow Sniddle Hill Lane down and onto Westlands Avenue. Cross over Manor Road, diagonally to enter Bold Venture Park and now follow the left hand path at the base of the once weather station. Do not cross the little bridge, but take the path following the stream downhill. The path winds around, but eventually reaches the ornamental lake. Turn left and the main gates are just beyond the war memorial, bringing us to the end of the walk.

Michael



All photographs taken from stock