

Ramblers Gems



A Spring Vale Rambling Class Publication

Volume 2 Issue 3

15th January 2021

For further information or to submit a contribution email: svrcramblers@gmail.com Web Site <http://www.springvaleramblers.co.uk/>

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 Watch Out Birds / Avoid Winter Falls
- 2 An English Winter's Day/The Woodland Trust
- 3 Great British Treasurer Hunt
- 4 Lead a Walk
- 5 Old Maps

Watch Out Birds

Something is coming. Counting Down the Days
January isn't an easy month at the best of times – and we've starting the year with restrictions that prevent us from accessing many of the country's nature reserves. With many of us being asked to stay at home, we all need new and interesting activities to occupy ourselves. The good news is that January is one of the best months for watching birds. That's why it's also the month of Big Garden Birdwatch.

Your blue tits and house sparrows have probably become familiar friends over the last few months, but do you know how many visit your feeders? Is there a tree sparrow hidden in the flock? Could something really unusual be in your garden? Now's your chance to find out. The **RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch** starts on weekend of 29-31 January so get ready for the day.

Avoid Winter Falls

Winter walking has a beauty all of its own. Brave the cold and you'll be rewarded with landscapes transformed by low sunlight and dustings of frost. Through leafless trees, you'll see new views and distant horizons. Wildlife is easier to spot in the stillness of a winter woodland and, after a long walk on a chilly day, there's the promise of a cosy pub with a crackling fire.

This last week saw the whole area around Darwen and Blackburn covered in a blanket of snow and as the week progressed the underlying snow compacted and turned usually muddy footpaths into dangerous sheets of ice. To allow you to still venture out in these conditions it is highly recommended that you invest in a pair of ice grips. They consist of high-density rubber intertwined with a steel spiral that grips remarkably well on ice and fits tightly onto the sole of your walking boot.

The leaders in this field and recommended by many walkers are known as **Yaktracks**, these are available at leading outdoor stores and online. More snow and ice is forecast for next week, so be prepared and buy a pair.



Eleanor

An English Winter's Day

Written by Paul L. Kennedy

On those cold and frosty winter's mornings when the grass crunches beneath your feet, and you're wrapped up in layers, hats and scarves, as is everyone else you meet

When each time you exhale a breath of steam quickly disappears into the chilled air, and any part of you that is open or exposed is numbed and quickly covered, or beware

Often every outside surface is dusted with winter's cold makeup white, and Jack Frost at your nose your ears and fingertips tries to take a bite.

Icicles form to look just like the teeth of some long since past prehistoric beast. Winter's grip in some places on this our Earth holds on; we hope never ever to cease.

The winter sun is low in the sky and its weak rays have little warmth, if any. God's creatures brave the cold in search of food, but really not that many.

Snug in their winter's long sleep, others see neither day nor night. The world outside of which they knew now blanketed cold and white.

Eventually when the night draws in and there are no clouds and the sky is clear, and the only light is from the moon, its silvery glow throughout the heavens appear.

The temperature drops until the very air you breathe chills your lungs with every gasp, and even the tiniest sound seems to be magnified and its echo all around is cast.

And when the morning light again returns as the sun is again risen from its slumber, the beauty of our treasured land we once more behold, with eyes of awe and wonder.

A contribution from Pesto Cenorr

The Woodland Trust

The UK's largest woodland conservation charity is the Woodland Trust and the charity cares for more than 1000 woods across the country, ranging from small urban woodlands to rugged Highland forests. Each year these woods remove a vast quantity of carbon from the atmosphere, storing it not only in trees but also in shrubs and even soil.

Local Trust Woods available to visit

The Polyphemus Wood Darwen

Located off Knowle Lane Darwen

Created in 2005 to mark the bicentenary of the Battle of Trafalgar this broadleaf woodland is named after one of Nelson's fleet, with over 15000 trees including oak, ash, alder, birch, rowan, hazel, hawthorn and holly. It occupies a prominent position with good views of Darwen Tower and visitors can enjoy a network of paths, open ground, meadow areas and a small pond which has been restored.



Smithills Estate Bolton

Large Car Park on Walker Fold Rd Bolton

The Smithills Estate is the largest site the Woodland Trust has ever acquired in England. The estate is steeped in history and shadowed by the famous Winter Hill TV mast. The site is a mix of grassland, farmland, moorland, wooded cloughs (ravines) and bog habitats, crisscrossed by dry stone walls, with panoramic views over Bolton to Manchester. By planting trees and re-wetting dried out blanket bog, it is hoped to reintroduce twite, brown hare, little owl and adder - all species that were once found on the Estate, but currently are sadly missing in action.

Michael C



Great British Treasure Hunt

In a 2020 32nd edition of Ramblers' Gems there was an article on suggested Christmas presents for ramblers!

One recommended present was 'The Ordnance Survey Great British Treasure Hunt', and I was lucky enough to get a copy. It is based on 40 maps stretching across Britain and starts from the Scottish Highlands.

The Foreword begins with the words 'The sound of treading on tightly packed snow is very distinctive, somewhere between a squeak and a crunch Well, we can all relate to that this month.

From the Introduction 'It is clear that 2020 has been a challenge for all of us...

spending more time indoors than normal, keeping safe, and keeping yourself entertained...with a puzzle book in hand'. 2021 does seem to be a repeat of 2020 at the moment doesn't it!

Then follows a good section on Common Map Abbreviations and Symbols and I do recommend studying this before you start the puzzles. I bet you will need to refer back to it a time or two.

Questions are split into four levels - Easy, Medium, Tricky and Challenging and there is a Key Puzzle with each map. You will need to solve each of the Key Puzzles for the final challenge.

Next there is 'A Letter from Aunt Bea' which starts with the question 'Have you ever been really bored of staying in your house?' I hope that when things get better you become, like Aunt Bea, as obsessed with seeing as much of our beautiful country as possible. I love East Lancs and Lancashire, but I cannot wait to start traveling again.

Map 1 is the Callanish Stones on Lewis, Outer Hebrides so it brought back a lot of memories of my first day and hike from my 2017 holiday. One mention of Lewisian Gneiss and my attention is always grabbed. I carry a piece in my rucksack at all times!

I am skipping some Maps/Puzzles and doing all the ones relating to places I have been first. So, in the Scotland section Loch Ness and Inveraray Jail will be



done before Skye Bridge, Ben Nevis and Glasgow. Then it will be on to Northern England as I must discipline myself to complete each one of the six areas of the UK before I move on to the next.

I hope that this book will improve my map reading skills as I answer the eight questions relating to each map. At the Callanish Stones the Challenging number 7 and 8 questions taxed me a bit more. I did find I needed a pencil and paper to jot things down, but the Key Puzzle was easy as I have spent so much time in Scotland in recent years.

I really recommend this book and 'a map a day might just keep boredom away'!



Callanish Stones The Calanais Standing Stones are an extraordinary cross-shaped setting of stones erected 5,000 years ago. They predate England's famous Stonehenge. The Callanish Stones are Lewisian Gneiss.



Dun Carloway Broch near the Stones was also built from Lewisian Gneiss. The broch was probably constructed about 200 BC.



Lewisian Gneiss - The Oldest Rocks in Britain - and some of the Oldest in the World. This is a closeup of the stones in Dun Carloway Broch

Barbara S

Lead a Walk

Almost anyone can lead a low level walk, especially for a friendly little group like SVRC. Why not give it a go? Now is the time to plan the routes.



Firstly, pick an area you are familiar with, and if possible, has interesting features, be that architecturally, or some social history, interesting geological features or flowers and fauna to be seen en route.

Mark out your route on a map – many are downloadable nowadays. Even if using a pre-printed walk from a website, always have the relevant OS map and compass with you as well. A lot of walkers have all singing and dancing GPS machines now but don't rely on them – the batteries can run down. Walk, or "pioneer" the route near to the time – too soon in advance and things can change. Whilst pioneering, time the walk and be on the lookout for a good lunch stop. The weather can't be booked in advance so try and find an alternative sheltered lunch stop if possible. When timing the walk remember that it takes more time to get 10 people over a stile than just 1!!

On the day of the walk – relax!! Arrive in plenty of time and make sure everyone knows each other. (*I recently walked with another group and we were all strangers, so the walk leader did a little "ice breaker" at the start of the walk, you know the stuff; name, where had you come from, what did you do when not walking, and how long been walking. It did work, as during the walk, it was easier to start conversations – "Oh you have come from XXX, that is quite a way for a 6 mile walk" etc etc. Or, so you are a tax inspector!!!*).

Give an overview of the walk and what might be seen along the way. Entice people in, with telling them when lunch is ☺. Count the number of people you have with you; you don't want to lose anyone!

Along with your normal walking kit, bring a basic first aid kit and whistle. The Ramblers webpage has a handy list for walk leaders.

We all know the rules about not walking in front of the walk leader, and it is the leader who sets the pace – so don't run off like a dog after a rabbit. (*again, I had a very unpleasant experience with another group where I nearly ended up running in order to keep up! Needless to say I avoid that walk leader like the plague now.*)

It is good practice to have a back marker, who knows the route and can mop up the stragglers and who can signal ahead if there are any problems. It is also good walking etiquette to wait to ensure all are safely over stiles etc. If need be telling the group to "walk to the next wall/hedge etc and wait for me". The back marker can also be on "traffic duty" to ensure everyone follows correct paths etc at major turns. SVRC always have a second leader for summer walks who has pioneered the walk as well.



Plan stops to admire the view – which we all know really means getting your breathe back, and also if going to be walking all day – "comfort" breaks might be needed along the way. Potential stops could be identified on the pioneering walk if public loos are not available on the route. the walk does take in significant features e.g. the turreted railway bridge at Turton – factor in time for folk to stop, discuss, photograph etc.

At the end of the walk, make sure you still have same number of walkers, thank folk for taking trouble to turn up – especially if persisting it down. And in my case – try to end near a café – for that much needed brew and scone. Why not volunteer to be a back marker/second leader and see if it is for you? When we are back walking, ask the Secretary about how you can help.

Jane C

Old Maps

I have in my possession some prints of old maps of Darwen dating from the late 19th century. The prints are not easy to read, but they do reveal some quite interesting points. Large parts of the Darwen area are blank and are still rural, except for the odd farmhouse. The built-up areas feature a multitude of mills or “works” and there are reservoirs everywhere. Some of these reservoirs seemed to be quite a distance from the nearest mill. The mills were built first with the reservoirs constructed wherever they could. The rows of terraced houses were built and expanded around the mill to accommodate the growing population. Most of these mills and reservoirs have long since disappeared, but evidence can still be found today in the remains of an old gate post or the remnants of a stone wall.

On the subject of water, what is also interesting to note is that the original Darwen sewage works was further south than it is today. On the maps they are shown roughly in the area where Crown Paints buildings now stands and not where they are now in the Lower Eccleshill area.

The maps show that Darwen Football Club had its original ground in the area where Hindle St and Harwood St are now and not in the Anchor area.

Closer to home, I live on the Birch Hall housing estate and of course this wasn't built until the 1950s. So, on the maps that area is just blank, except for small clusters of buildings named Birch Hall, which, of course, the estate is named after. Birch Hall appears to be in the area where the Golf Club house now stands. Some footpaths can also be made out on the maps especially if there are also tracks.

I would welcome any response from anybody who believes that these maps might be erroneous in some other things they portray.

If you would like to check out the area in the vicinity of your house, then visit [the National Library of Scotland Old Map](#) section and select the 1894 map.

Tony C



A section from the First Edition 1894 Ordnance Survey 25 inch to the mile map showing the area around Hollins Grove Darwen.



A section from the First Edition 1894 Ordnance Survey 25 inch to the mile map detailing the Cricket and Football Ground before it was relocated to the Anchor Ground in Darwen