

# Ramblers Gems



A Spring Vale Rambling Class Publication

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## HAPPY EASTER EVERYONE

### Restoration of the Tower

Several of the paths up to Darwen Tower are now closed to allow work to be undertaken on the routes up to the moors. The main route to be closed is the track up from Bold Venture Park. This will allow repairs to be carried out providing access for contractors' vehicles, so building materials, fencing and scaffolding can be transported up to the site. During the restoration work the Tower will be closed. The delicate restoration work on the Tower will include the use of lime mortar to repoint external walls, ensuring that the structure is again weatherproof and watertight.



The closed footpath from the Tower down to Belgrave Rd

This work does require dry weather with temperatures above 5°C. (*Ed So finger crossed for fine weather*) The work also includes repairs to the rainwater disposal system, waterproofing and sealing of the deck of the upper observation levels, replacement polycarbonate windows, and installation of information boards.

The public have been assured that every measure has been taken to ensure that wildlife will not be harmed by the proposed works. The Council has commissioned an ecologist to help protect habitats with particular emphasis on bats and ground nesting birds.

Once the repairs have been completed public access will be improve, ensuring the long-term sustainability of this iconic landmark can remain open to the public for future generations.

**Michael C**

## Five Senses for Walking

My first articles for Ramblers Gens 2020 were about books I had read and how they had inspired me to go travelling and visit many of the islands and locations described in the books. Since the beginning of 2021 I have asked myself ‘Why do I Walk’ and ‘Why do other people walk’?

A lot has been written about the benefits of walking for physical and mental health, general wellbeing and mindfulness. Excellent reasons, but many people walk to achieve a target – 500 or 1000 miles, to climb to a greater height, to bag trig points, to increase their walking speed or to complete longer distances or a walking trail.

Then there are the social walkers – those who turn out to meet friends and have a good old natter, to walk at a leisurely pace. Others want more of a dash to the real ale pub or like to visit a renowned or favourite café for tea and cake and the gourmets amongst us walk because they have pre-booked a table for a meal and have a specific finish time to aim for.

We all have our own habits, and reasons for walking. Why do I walk? For the same reason that I garden. To be closer to nature. If I don’t get outside I develop what my grandma referred to as ‘stable fever’! I walk so that I can perceive and respond to my surroundings and enjoy the rhythms of nature.

I learn something every time I go for a walk and return fulfilled, satisfied and usually happier and contented with my efforts even when things go wrong or not entirely to plan. A walk allows me time to reflect, to reenergise and gather strength if something in my life isn’t quite right. I solve many a problem whilst out on a walk.



Getting outside relieves the monotony of daily life. We can use our real-world encounters to enhance the sensory appeal of a walk.

We use our **sight** to watch the seasons changing when everything seems like a blur, everyday seems the same and to stimulate our imagination when we are exposed to the fresh colours of each day.

We use our ears to **hear** the variety of bird song in hedgerows, woods and on moors. To detect the hum of bees and insects in the meadows and grasses. The leaves rustling on a gentle breeze, the tumbling roar of a waterfall or the babbling of a brook enhance our walks.



We can **smell** the countryside in the floral sweet wild flowers, the tangy wild garlic, the clean crisp ozone of a coastal walk, the pungent smell of a working farmyard or the scent of honey from a field full of aromatic clover.

We can **touch** the heather, moss, lichens and bark. We can forage and **taste** the wild herbs, flowers plantain leaves, nettle seeds and berries.

When we connect with nature, we live richer lives filled with new and sometimes unexpected sensations.

So, whatever reason you have for walking in 2021 why not add in something new – set a new and different target, include a social element, reconnect with nature, stop and observe the natural world around you to sharpen all your senses, enjoy the simple pleasures and hopefully you will feel less isolated from your environment and people.

Be adventurous and leave your usual habitat. Experience a change of scene, look for new horizons and a taste of the unknown. Be inspired to ramble more often and further afield with Spring Vale Rambling Class.

**Barbara S**

## Signs of Spring for Walkers

*This report was written by Tom Johnston, a member of the Class back for many years. It details a Spring Vale Ramblers walk that was published in the Lancashire Evening Telegraph in March 1981. This 9-mile ramble is still popular with our members today.*

Early signs of spring - hazel catkins and two lambs were seen by members of Spring Vale Rambling Class on their penultimate winter ramble which had its starting point at Wilpshire bus terminus.

On a fine mild windy day, seven members followed the road away from the town for 300 yards before crossing over the road to follow the path up the ginnel to the top of Hollowhead Lane. Crossing the lane to the stile they followed the well-defined path over the golf links, taking in the excellent views over the Ribble Valley to the Trough of Bowland and around to Pendle Hill.

On reaching Little Snodworth Farm they carried on straight across a lane and road and through the fields to Whittle Hall. Following the side of the farm, the track brought the ramblers onto the road over Billington Moor. Turning right along the road they soon passed Nab Top Farm to turn right and then left to pass through a gate onto the track leading to Higher Whalley Banks.



Looking towards Bowley Camp

Before reaching the house, they turned right down the slope, over a stile to join the path crossing Whalley Nab. A right turn took them past renovated cottages and the caravan shop towards Whalley Banks Farm and to the path leading down through the fields to Dean Brook and the woods by the River Calder. Climbing away from the river a stile on the right

showed the ramblers the way to Bowley Camp and onto the lane leading to Great Harwood.

On reaching the main road two right turns took them to the signposted lane leading to Dean Clough and the reservoir. As the ramblers crossed the embankment the strong wind was whipping up the water into waves giving it a sea like appearance.

The ramblers followed the path alongside the reservoir before climbing away from it to the road. On crossing the road they saw the stile which showed a way down to Little Snodworth where they rejoined the path leading back over golf links and onward to their starting point.

**Michael C**

## The Firewood Poem

by Lady Celia Congreve

Beechwood fires are bright and clear  
If the logs are kept a year,  
Chestnut's only good they say,  
If for logs 'tis laid away.

Make a fire of Elder tree,  
Death within your house will be;  
But ash new or ash old,  
Is fit for a queen with crown of gold.

Birch and fir logs burn too fast  
Blaze up bright and do not last,  
it is by the Irish said  
Hawthorn bakes the sweetest bread.

Elm wood burns like churchyard mould,  
E'en the very flames are cold  
But ash green or ash brown  
Is fit for a queen with golden crown

Poplar gives a bitter smoke,  
Fills your eyes and makes you choke,  
Apple wood will scent your room  
Pear wood smells like flowers in bloom

Oaken logs, if dry and old  
keep away the winter's cold  
But ash wet or ash dry  
a king shall warm his slippers by.

**Pesto Cenorr**

## Ogham and the Lunar Tree Calendar - Part 1

The Celtic alphabet of Ogham is pronounced 'Oh-wam'. It is seen used in written form in Ireland from around the 5th Century AD. However, notched grooves carved into rocks seem to hint at it existing for centuries before this, in its symbolic form. Within the British Isles it is often cited as the first attempt at written communication.

It is known that the Druids in the late Iron Age and beyond used a system in the form of a calendar based on the cycles of the moon and the celebration of the four Solstices.

The Ogham alphabet in turn has been linked to native British Trees. Each tree in the calendar has its own moon cycle span of 28 days and an Ogham letter symbol.

### **Alder, 4th Moon of the Celtic Year – (March 18 – April 14)**

The alder represents the third letter of the ogham alphabet 'Fearn', pronounced fairin, and the fourth month in the Celtic tree calendar. Alder lives in balance. It has a symbiotic relationship with bacteria that lives in its root nodules to help fix nitrogen. As such Alder can actually improve the soil it lives in. Living in wetter areas, its wood is also very strong and durable under water and it is a good building material because it is flexible. Alder speaks of balance between strength and receptiveness to working together.



The Alder month is a time for making spiritual decisions, magic relating to prophecy and divination, and getting in touch with your own intuitive processes and abilities. Alder flowers and twigs are known as charms to be used in Faerie magic. Whistles were once made out of Alder shoots to call upon Air spirits, so it's an ideal wood for making a pipe or flute if you're musically inclined.

Recognisable for its purple sheen in spring, alder trees are one of our smaller native tree species. They have a light, delicate appearance, with grey bark, flecked with white. The leaves are round and toothed. The seeds develop in cones; in fact, alder is the only British native deciduous tree to develop cones.



*Whilst out walking try to identify an Alder tree between the 1st and 14<sup>th</sup> April.*

**Jean G**

## The British Hedgehog Preservation Society

The Society, founded in 1982, is a registered UK Charity dedicated to helping and protecting our native hedgehogs. It is through their campaigns, advocacy and educational projects that they work to raise awareness of the practical steps we can all take to help reverse the decline of hedgehogs in the wild. Their work improves their welfare and safeguards the future of this much-loved animal and also funds research that provides important new insights into the conservation and welfare of hedgehogs.

Here are a few simple steps that can help provide hedgehogs with food and shelter.

1. Create access holes between yours and your neighbour's garden. This allows them to forage over a wider area.
2. Plant a hedge that will provide a much needed shelter and a place to hibernate during the winter months. If that is not practical, then a small hedgehog house is a really good alternative.
3. Other things you can easily do is make any ponds or water features safe, by introducing an easy means for the hedgehog to climb out. Avoid using slug pellets as these will harm the hedgehog and if you have encouraged hedgehogs, they will eat your slugs. Check that pile of leaves or long grass before carrying out any strimming work.
4. Offer hedgehogs either a good quality hedgehog food, meaty cat or dog food or dry biscuits for cats. Only ever offer water to drink from a shallow bowl, as milk can cause the animal to suffer.



Eleanor

## Local Development Plans

During the last few weeks information boards have been on display in Darwin market, setting out the council's proposed new development plans for the future. Many people would have been curious because of a controversial news stories in the local press, concerning proposed house building on Green Belt land, much to the concern of local residents.

I, like I suspect most people, believe that once greenbelts areas are designated as such, it was safeguarded for future. However, they are only valid apparently, up until the next development plan is prepared, which are re-examined every few years. The new development plans for the Borough, proposes to take some land out of greenbelt and make it available for house building or industrial use. One of those sections of greenbelt that has been re-allocated for housing is the area around Ellison Fold known locally as Bailey's Field. This has not gone down well with local residents. There are lots of unrecorded mine shafts in this area.



Old mine workings on Bailey's Field Darwin

There are however some interesting proposals to designate some new areas as Countryside Access Improvement Areas, presumably this involves footpath improvements, stiles gates and good signage. One such area includes the countryside between Entwistle and Turton reservoir and Darwin. Another area is to the north and west of Witton Park in Blackburn.

Tony C