

Ramblers Gems



A Spring Vale Rambling Class Publication

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

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Boxing, Badgers and Botany

My first Spring Vale ramble of the season was with Steph and Keith on the Glasson Dock walk last Saturday. Although I have rambled in the Glasson Dock area many times before, this was a new route for me. The walk was very enjoyable, particularly from a Natural History point of view.

Early during the walk, we were entertained as we watched hares boxing in a field each trying to out play the other. Mute Swans had built a large nest on the canal offside and the female was incubating her eggs while the male kept a watchful eye on all, as we passed close by on the towpath.

On entering Back Wood, an old woodland surrounding Thurnham Hall, a Roe Deer made a startled appearance before retreating deeper into the wood. An entrance to a Badger sett was discovered, not yards from the path we were walking along. No activity was observed, for the badgers were deep underground, waiting until dusk before emerging to forage in the cool of the evening.

Back Wood was also renowned for its large variety of wildflowers. There were the large patches of bright yellow Primrose, alongside low growing lime green Golden Saxifrage which covered large sections of the woodland floor. The white starry flowers of Lesser Stitchwort, the purple red flowers of the two foot high Sweet Rocket (also known as Dame's Violet), the yellow Dead Nettle, and the white flowered Wood Anemone were all vying for sunlight, before the tree leaves engulfed the woodland canopy. Also competing for the light was the Crosswort, a flowering member of the coffee family and the dandelion like flowers of Lesser Celandine. Vast spreads of bluebells carpeted the woodland floor, turning the vista into a sea of bright blue. The pungent smell of wild garlic percolated our nostrils as we inevitable had to brush past the just emerging white flower of this plant.



Crosswort



Wild Garlic

Towards the end of the ramble, we walked along a path running around the far edge of Glasson Dock Marina. This gave a wonderful closeup view of nesting Coots with their chicks scurrying around, a couple of Great Crested Grebes were on the water, occasionally diving, only to reappear some distant from where they submerged. Skimming over the calm water of the marina were House Martins, catching an afternoon feast of flying insects. The martin is recognisable by its shorter stubbier tail, whereas swallows have very long prominent tail streamers.

Thank you, Steph and Keith.

Tony C

Hedgehog Awareness Week

The Hedgehog Awareness Week ran from 2nd – 8th May this year and its aim is to raise the profile of the Britain's only spiny mammal. This year the Hedgehog Charity is asking people create their very own hedgehog haven! Gardens are a stronghold for hedgehogs, and we can make their lives so much easier with very little effort!

Check out Volume 2 Issue 14 on the 2nd April to find practical ways that you can help protect the humble hedgehog.



Barbara S

Answers to Spring Quiz

The questions appear in last weeks issue

1. Sawley Abbey.
2. Whalley Abbey Gatehouse.
3. Alice Nutter. Lancashire Witch Trials 1612.
4. (a) Clarion House, Jinny Lane, Roughlee
(b) St Saviour, Stydd Lane, Stydd, Ribchester
(c) Hurstwood Hall Guest House Worsthorne with Hurstwood.
5. (a) Cockersand Abbey, Slack Lane, Thurnham,
(b) Sizergh Castle, (c) Haworth Art Gallery, Accrington.
6. Crumbly, Tasty and Creamy cheese.
7. Pendle Hill, Boulsworth Hill and Weets Hill.
8. SVRC Christmas Lunch at The Rock Inn, Tockholes.
9. Burr's Country Park
10. CRoW - The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CRoW Act) gives the public right of access to land mapped as 'open country' (mountain, moor, heath and down) or registered common land. These areas are known as 'open access land'. The trig, flush and spider are at Hutton Roof.

The Maypole Dance

a poem by Robert Browning

Come my lord, 'tis time you see
To do the maypole dance with me
A day that's full of revelry
With hearts now full of joy and glee.

Come now, my lord and take your place
I see the smile now on your face
Around this maypole now we'll chase
And run a very winsome race

The maypole dance, My lord, is fun
A day of joy for everyone
So now the music has begun
We will now dance till setting sun.

When day is done and night is nigh
And moonlight soon will fill the sky
We'll walk together, you and I
Before we have to say goodbye.

And yet, perhaps one little kiss
Or maybe more?...a night of bliss?
With stalwart Man and willing Miss
A maypole dance may lead to this!

Contribution by Pesto Cenorr

The Tradition of the Maypole

The Maypole dance is a ceremonial spring ritual, long known to Western Europeans. The folk dance is performed around a tall pole garlanded with greenery or flowers and often hung with ribbons that are woven into complex patterns by the dancers.

Such dances are survivals of ancient dances around a living tree as part of spring rites to ensure fertility. It is usually performed on May 1 (May Day). Practiced for generations in countries such as Germany and England, the maypole tradition dates back to the dances ancient people used to do around actual trees in hopes of harvesting a large crop.

Old saying...

Make hay in May for you may never know what June is coming with and you may never know what July will present! ... **Ernest Agyemang Yeboah**

Pesto Cenorr

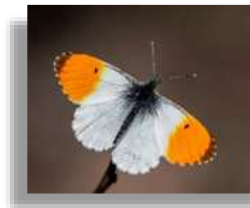
Nature in May

A perfect time for spotting beetles - from the cockchafer to the wasp beetle. But what else happens in May?

If you do one thing in May please sow wildflower seeds to provide nectar for insects such as bees, hoverflies and butterflies.

Across Britain, hedgerows are white with cow parsley and in damp woods carpets of wild garlic and wood sorrel cover the ground. Red campion and germander speedwell are flowering on sunny banks and hedgerows.

In rivers you can spot sheets of water crowfoot. In the west of Britain sea trout are making their way upstream to breed. Their relatives the brown trout are rising to hatches of mayflies, also prey for metallic green damselflies such as the banded demoiselle. Mayflies and early dragonflies are on the wing – laying eggs in ponds. Look out for orange tip butterflies they love hedge mustard.



Orange Tip Butterfly - Male



Mayfly

Look out for the frightening (but harmless) cockchafer beetles as they blunder about on warm evenings, especially over farmland. Other insects to look for are the wasp beetle and the cardinal beetle, which sit out in the open protected by their warning colours.

National dawn chorus day takes place so start learning some bird song... just open your window and listen. Taking place on the first Sunday of May (2nd May 2021), International *Dawn Chorus Day* is the worldwide celebration of nature's greatest symphony. Feed and water birds and enjoy a visit to an estuary.

Nightingales used to sing in southern woods and garden warblers and blackcaps sing in scrub and woodland. House martins and swallows are nest building. Swifts return and scream through the city streets bringing a touch of the tropics to our lives.

Baby foxes and badgers are being weaned. At dusk badger cubs emerge from their setts accompanied by their parents. Harder to spot are baby hares crouching in the long grass of open fields. Hedgehogs are courting.



Young Fox Cubs



Pipistrelle Bat

Bats move to summer roosts. Did you know a baby pipistrelle bat is only about the size of a 50p coin? In May they are unable to fly, but sometimes find their way into unfortunate situations. Don't handle them, check out the bat the Bat Conservation Trust. <https://www.bats.org.uk> Bats come out at twilight near water.

Many flowers are in bloom and insects are busy surviving. Look for beetles, bugs and bumblebees. With their mixture of woody plants and herbs, hedge banks are especially good for biodiversity.

Visit a bluebell wood e.g. Spring Wood, Whalley, Roddlesworth Wood or Hagg Wood, near Worsthorne.



A Bluebell Wood in full bloom

JOIN SVRC at Bilsborrow on Saturday, 15th May when Michael will be leading a 7.3 mile walk up the Brock Valley, an area renowned for its bluebell woods and an abundance of wildlife.

Please ring the Secretary to book your place on this walk. Walks are currently open to members only. Why not join us by becoming a member, the annual membership fee is only £5.00. Check out our website on how to join the Class.

Jean G

Geocaching part 3.

I know I have been late in doing the article and have no excuse! Initially in part 1 I had mentioned that I would attempt to look for The Darren Mushroom 7a on the moors above Lord's Hall. I have since noticed that this geocache has not been found since 2019 and is in the area devastated by the fires – so it may not be there.

I will go and look, but in the meantime, I thought I would do a step by step – finding your first geocache - using caches close to home that I have already found. So, I logged onto Geocaching.com and put my postcode in to search for nearby caches and set off up Sunnyfield Lane Hoddlesden.



Fig 1

Fig 1. Shows the area of Hoddlesden – Sunnyfield Lane. The two yellow smiley faces are the geocaches. If I had not already found them, they would be green circles. Clicking onto the first circle told me – this was “14Whit” part of a series based around Whittlestone and Blacksnape.

This is a relatively easy one, as the difficulty and terrain are both 1.5. The hint to the caches whereabouts was “15mph low” and my app on the phone told me I was about 50m away.



Fig 2a



Fig 2b

As I got nearer the hint item was obvious. (Fig 2a and b) So, I had a poke about the bottom of the post and found an old ceramic plant watery “thingy” (Fig 2c). Tucked away inside was the cache and inside the plastic tube, the log to sign. (Fig 2d)



Fig 2c



Fig 2d

I then moved onto “15Whit”, also a 1.5 for difficulty and terrain but did not have a clue, just the coordinates. This cache was placed by someone called Bxgeo who I know from experience has some sneaky caches, so approached this one with my “cacher’s eyes” !!



As I got nearer the ‘Geocache Zone’ or GZ for short, using the app, my compass pointed over to the fence, showing 5.28 metres to the cache. (depending on GPS coverage this can be a few metres out.)

Apologies for the reflection.



Take a good look at the end of those old pipes acting as a makeshift gate. See anything unusual? Sneaky...



So now you know why sometimes out on rambles I disappear into a hedge, or poke

about under stiles, muttering, “it is around here somewhere!”

Jane C

On the Track - Withnell Nature Reserve

This is the fourth of the series of articles on the once thriving railway routes around the Blackburn and Darwen area. This one covers the disused railway track bed that once formed the line between Blackburn and Chorley.

In 1863 a Railway company calling itself the Lancashire Union Railway was formed to meet the needs of colliery owners in the Wigan area wanting to reduce the price of coal in the East Lancashire towns of Blackburn, Accrington and beyond. Building a line with a more direct route would reduce the price of coal for mill owners and households alike.

Work began on 6th December 1866 with the total length of the line from Cherry Tree junction to Chorley being just over 7 miles and cost over £500,000 (equivalent to £61M today). This was very expensive for a railway of this length in Victorian times. It ran over budget, due mainly to difficulties crossing the River Roddlesworth and its valley, north of Abbey Village. There was also the large 9 arch viaduct crossing the Leeds - Liverpool Canal (the Lancaster Canal as it was known then). One other large expensive construction was the Three Arch Bridge (over the A674 Preston Old Rd) and the embankment connecting the line to the main Preston - Blackburn route near Cherry Tree.



The Railway Bridge crossing Preston Old Rd Cherry Tree

Apart from the need to move coal, there were several industries along the line that wanted access to sidings running to them. These became quite extensive, with almost small branch lines being built into them as was the case at the Heapey Bleach Works and Abbey Village Mill. The line closed to passengers on 4th January 1960, but freight continued to use it, passing through the silent and ghostly stations until it was finally closed to all through traffic on 3rd January 1966.

Most of the track is now not walkable and has been taken over as farmland or for private use, although evidence can still be seen as old bridges are crossed.

The major section that can be walked is known as the Withnell Local Nature Reserve which extends from Abbey Village through into Brinscall. This 4.7 hectare site has been designated as a conservation area and now forms an important wildlife corridor into the West Pennine Moors. As you walk along the route look out for a large variety of wildlife including the grey squirrel, common shrew, weasels and stoats. Bats are also thought to roost under the stone arched bridge coming out to feed at night. The stream, pond and marshy areas host a number of amphibian species such as frogs, toads and newts. Detailed information boards are placed at strategic places along the length of the trail.



The Railway Bridge crossing School Lane Brinscall

The railway originally dominated the village of Brinscall with the trackbed crossing School Lane over a stone arched bridge, now long since demolished.

Spring Vale Ramblers often walk out from Brinscall heading off towards White Coppice and come across evidence of the old rail workings with siding gate posts or the flat track bed of the sidings entering the old Brinscall Hall Print Works. We have followed a route leading under the railway bridge to Brinscall Hall. This tunnel runs under the embankment that once led onto Brinscall Station.

Further along on this line near to the old station house at Heapey, a short branch line went off to the right and entered the ROF Heapey. It was here, within tunnels, that ammunition from the large ordinance factory at Chorley was stored, before transportation by overnight train.

Eleanor