

# Ramblers Gems



A Spring Vale Rambling Class Publication

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## Latest Restrictions

Coronavirus cases are rapidly rising across the country and the latest restrictions that came into force on 5<sup>th</sup> January 2021 are classed as the third [National Lockdown](#) and you must stay at home.

You are allowed to leave home to exercise in a public outdoor place, but this can only be done on your own, with people you live with or with someone in your support bubble. You are allowed to go for a walk when on your own **and with 1** other person from another household.

You must limit exercising to once per day and you should not travel outside your local area.

## Twelfth Night

Twelfth Night immortalised by William Shakespeare, is the traditional end to the Christmas festivities and the date by which your Christmas decorations should be taken down. Also known as Epiphany Eve in the Christian calendar, there has been much disagreement over whether it falls on 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> January, with different churches subscribing to different theories as to which is correct. The Church of England celebrates it on the 5<sup>th</sup>, asserting that it refers to the night before Epiphany, the day when the wise men visited the infant Jesus. In some UK towns, Old Twelfth Night is still celebrated on 17<sup>th</sup> January. This was the date that corresponded with Twelfth Night in the Julian calendar, before the change in calendars in 1752.

Most people think that it will bring bad luck if you leave your decorations up after the 5<sup>th</sup>. Some people also think it's wrong to take them down too early. In ancient times, people believed that tree-spirits lived in the holly and the ivy. After the festive season, they would be released outside but if they were let go before Christmas ended, there could be problems with the harvest as a result.

According to one superstition, Christmas decorations not taken down by Twelfth Night should be left up until Candlemas Day (2nd February) before being taken down. Other people say the best remedy is to leave them up until Twelfth Night the following year.

Whatever date you decided on let us hope that the new year brings us all back together to enjoy our walking as Spring Vale Rambling Class.

**Michael C**



## An English Winter's Day

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.

**Contribution from Pesto Cenorr**

## Look around you

Many years ago, when I was a pupil at Darwen Vale, I used to go on youth hostelling holidays to the Lake District and Yorkshire, which were organised by my geography teacher Mr Pack.

From these walking holidays and the geography field trips, I still remember the frequently repeated mantra,

*'The objective is not to get from A to B as quickly as possible ...look around you'.*

The following poem expresses this notion beautifully:

### Leisure (1911) by W.H. Davies

What is this life if, full of care,  
We have no time to stand and stare?  
No time to stand beneath the boughs  
And stare as long as sheep or cows:  
No time to see, when woods we pass,  
Where squirrels hide their nuts in grass:  
No time to see, in broad daylight,  
Streams full of stars, like skies at night:  
No time to turn at Beauty's glance,  
And watch her feet, how they can dance:  
No time to wait till her mouth can  
Enrich that smile her eyes began?  
A poor life this if, full of care,  
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**Julie C**

# Tracks in the Snow

The late Lancashire naturalist Ron Freethy wrote regular nature columns for the Lancashire Telegraph. I remember, on several occasions, he reported venturing out following falls of snow, to spot lots of animal tracks in the fresh snow. Although it made a good story, you sometimes felt he was using poetic licence even a little exaggeration. However, I remember some years ago after it had been snowing overnight, I took my dog for a walk along footpaths and tracks around Darwen Golf Course I remember being astonished by all the different animal tracks going in all directions in the fresh snow.

The tricky part once you've found some good tracks, is figuring out which creature made them.

There are many things to consider when looking at tracks

– How many toes can you see?

Badgers, weasels, stoats, pine martens and shrews have 5 toes on the back and front, whereas foxes, cats and dogs have 4. Some species such as rats, mice, squirrels, voles and beavers have four toes on the front and five on the back.

- Is it a front or back foot?
- What size is the print?
- Can you see claws? Cats keep their claws withdrawn when walking
- Is the paw print symmetrical? E.g. cats have asymmetrical front prints where as dogs are very symmetrical.
- What sort of gait did the animal have?

**Diagonal walkers** move their front left foot and back right foot at the same time eg deer, dogs, cats

**Pacers** move their front left and back left at the same time e.g. badgers

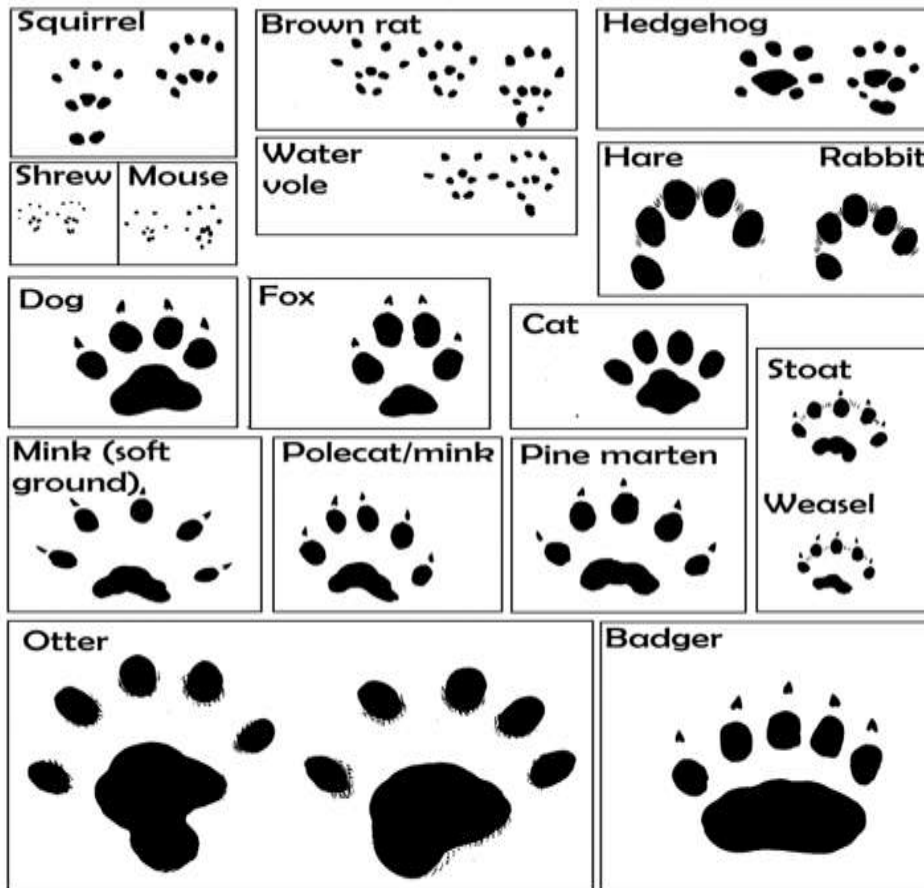
**Bounders** back feet land just behind the front feet e.g. weasels

**Gallopers** back feet land just in front of the front feet e.g. rabbits and rodents.

There are many other clues to look for such as hairs, droppings, runs or trails in the grass

Below is a key to British animal tracks, but not to scale.

Tony C



## Commemorative Stamps

The North York Moors will feature on the Royal Mail's first Special Stamps issue of 2021, celebrating the 70th anniversary of the founding of Britain's first National Parks.

Images of the stamp set feature ten of the 15 National Parks. The UK's National Parks cover a breath-taking range of natural environments: from cold tundra to temperate rainforest, from gigantic sea cliffs to rolling chalk hills, from razor-sharp mountains to marshy wetlands.

The journey to create the National Parks was a long and arduous route. By the early 20th century, the demands for public access to the countryside are growing – fuelled by widespread industrialisation and growing towns and cities.

By the 1930s, public pressure is at breaking point amid conflicts between landowners and people demanding greater access to the countryside. By 1932, the famous “mass trespasses” on Kinder Scout in the Peak District were taking place, leading to five men being imprisoned.

The seeds of change had been planted, however. By 1936, groups of leisure activity enthusiasts and nature conservationists formed the voluntary sectors Standing Committee on National Parks to argue the case for national parks and urges the government to act. Ongoing pressure culminates in the 1945 White Paper on National Parks, produced as part of the post-war reconstruction. The National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act was passed in 1949. But it wasn't until 1951 that The Lake District, Peak District, Dartmoor and Snowdonia national parks were created.

The fight of the public to protect and open up the countryside to ordinary people was finally won.

The ten parks featured in the stamps are: Peak District (founded 1951); Lake District (1951); Snowdonia (1951); Dartmoor (1951); North York Moors (1952); The Broads (1989); New Forest (2005); South Downs (2010); Pembrokeshire Coast (1952); Loch Lomond and The Trossachs (2002).

The stamps should be available from the 14<sup>th</sup> January.

**Barbara S**

The first edition National Park Stamps to be issued in 2021





## The Variety in Walking

How do you interpret the word walking?

To some it means walking to the shops, to others it means walking around your home, or in a purely scientific way it may mean to place one foot in front of the other? Of course, it is all of these but to me it always needs to have that added ingredient of getting outdoors into the fresh air.



Most people may be unaware of just how lucky we are when we look at what lies around us. The local area offers us a great variety of walking opportunities and you only need to go up to Darwen Tower to fully realise what this could mean. Walking in open spaces with large panoramic views stretching over miles can very easily take away your breath or just standing trying to identify those faraway hills lying in all directions make you realise that you really should look at a map so that you will know next time. But there is always someone who can point out the important ones! It is very easy to follow the outline of the coast and as an extra bonus, on an especially clear day, you can even see the Isle of Man. Blackpool Tower stands out as a beacon reminding you of childhood days from long ago with hot sunny days on the beach and those donkey rides.



As a further choice you may decide to opt for walking in more localised woodlands offering you the opportunity of seeing squirrels, beetles, frogs, rabbits and other wildlife. Wherever you are in the region there is always a slight chance of seeing an elusive deer. There is continually the prospect of being able to admire the variety of trees with their years of growth demonstrating their individuality through their twisted branches as they grow upwards towards the light. In Winter, their empty branches reach straight to the sky conserving all of their energy to allow new buds to form. Spring sees those same buds growing fatter and before we realise it Summer is upon us; the buds have exploded and the trees are no longer bare but are now totally covered in a barrage of green and are spending their days swaying in the breeze.



*It never fails to amaze me as to the total number of different colours of green that nature has up her sleeve.*

We should always remember that wherever you venture out walking, appropriate clothing and footwear is essential and do not forget the compulsory flask with a sandwich or piece of cake but most of all ENJOY the variety in walking.

**Maggie A**