

# Ramblers Gems



A Spring Vale Rambling Class Publication

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This week Ramblers Gems is 1 year old

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That's 52 editions, 256 pages, 365 articles and 21 contributors. Thank you one and all

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## Lyme Disease

The month of May is designated Lyme Awareness Month and here are some facts about this condition.

Lyme Disease is a bacterial infection caused by a bacterium *Borrelia Burgdorferi* that can be spread to humans by getting bitten by an infected tick. Lyme disease-carrying ticks can be found throughout the UK in urban parks and gardens as well as in the countryside, but the % of infected ticks is (at the moment) much lower than in most of Europe.

If you notice a rash or get flu-like symptoms after being out on a walk, get it checked out by your GP. It has a clinical diagnosis but can be difficult to diagnose as Lyme disease symptoms overlap with those of many



If you spot a tick that is actively feeding on you, **DO NOT** squeeze the body of the tick, as this may cause the head and body to separate, leaving the head embedded in your skin. **DO NOT** use your fingernails to remove a tick. Infection may enter via any breaks in your skin, e.g. close to the fingernail.



This is where a tick remover comes in handy! Pick the most suitable size hook for the tick. Then slide the hoop under the creature until it is held in the gap in the fork.

Next, lift the hook gently and rotate it. The tick will detach itself after a few turns. Once the tick is removed, disinfect the wound and keep the tick in a small plastic bag (or stuck to some tape) so, if needed, you can take it to your GP to be tested for carrying the disease.

Lyme disease is a tiny risk compared with COVID-19 – only on average about 10% of UK ticks carry it, and it gives rise to perhaps 10,000 cases per year in the UK, though precise numbers are not known. Unlike COVID-19, Lyme disease is a bacterial infection and when recognised early it is easily treated with antibiotics.



Ticks can also be easily picked up by your dog or cat. Regularly check their legs, nose and behind the ears. Pull back the fur to check that none have

become attached. If found, remove as described above and watch for symptoms such as joint swelling or a fever. Take them along to a vet for a check-up.

**Glenda B**

## The Pendle Witches

Spring Vale Ramblers often walk around the Newchurch in Pendle and Barley area; this is the renowned location for many of the folk tales regarding the Pendle Witches. Much mystique has arisen and many a novel has been written about the world famous Pendle Witches, but reality, in this case, turns out to be stranger than fiction.

The Pendle Witches lived in the early 1600s at a time of great religious persecution and superstition. The Protestant King James I had just survived the Catholic gunpowder plot. Catholics and those suspected of witchcraft (sometimes thought to be one and the same) would now come under more scrutiny than ever before. The King broadened the Witchcraft Act in 1604 which meant that more people after being convicted could now face the death penalty.

It was a dangerous time for two Pendle families, led by two wily old matriarchs, Demdike and Chattox. Long since widowed, their existence depended on exaggerating the cures they offered to local villagers. It would prove to be their undoing.

On a cold lonely road to Colne in early March 1612, a man collapsed to the ground, paralysed. His name was John Law, a pedlar from Halifax. Just moments before Demdike's granddaughter Alizon Device, had cursed him. He would not give her the pins that her grandmother had wanted, perhaps for a spell.



The 'witches' of Newchurch in Pendle



The book by W Harrison Ainsworth giving a fictional account of the Pendle Witches

Abraham Law, the pedlar's son hauled Alizon in front of the local magistrate, Roger Nowell. Alizon, overawed by the situation, confessed and incriminated both her grandmother, Demdike and her local rival Chattox.

The two were interrogated at Ashlar House (on the Padiham bypass between Fence and Higham), and perhaps wishing to enhance their local reputation tried to outdo each other with their stories, including Demdike's claim that she met the devil at Faugh's Delph near Newchurch. On 4<sup>th</sup> April 1612 Demdike, Chattox, Alizon Device and Chattox daughter Anne Redfern were committed for trial for witchcraft at Lancaster Castle.



Ashlar House Fence



This is Blacko Tower often mistaken for Malkin Tower.

On Good Friday, Demdike and her family the Devices and some neighbours has a meeting at Malkin Tower and feasted on stolen mutton. Nowell heard rumours that they were plotting to free the imprisoned women and blow-up Lancaster Castle. He sent a local constable, Henry Hargreaves to Malkin Tower to investigate.

Helped by Alizon's teenage brother James Device, the constable dug outside the walls of Malkin Tower. He unearthed human teeth stolen from the graveyard at St. Mary's Newchurch and a clay image. Later, James Demdike confessed to using a clear image to cause the death of Anne Townley. The others at the alleged witches Sabbath meeting were rounded up and imprisoned in Lancaster Castle, include the enigmatic gentlewoman, Alice Nutter of Roughlee.

On August 17<sup>th</sup>, the trial began. The prosecution's star witness was nine year old Janet Device who in court identified those who attended the Good Friday meeting, including her mother Elizabeth and Alice Nutter. This evidence, the confessions already given and the vigour of the prosecutors keen to ingratiate themselves to James I, meant that the trial was over after just three days. All the accused swung from the gallows, except for Demdike, who died as a prisoner before the trial.

**Michael C**

## Monastic Walks in Lancashire (Part 1)

A recent walk to Sawley Abbey made me consider what other monastic houses might have been established in Lancashire. Old Lancashire would have included 29+ monastic houses but if we remove from the list the ones now in Cumbria, Cheshire, Greater Manchester and Merseyside the list, according to Wikipedia, reduces to 17. Very little, if anything, remains of ten of the monastic houses but there are links to current buildings or locations, and one (Lytham Priory) has an exhibition centre.

There are six that we are able to visit on our Spring Vale Rambling Class of friends and family walks.

**Cockersand Abbey** is often include in our Glasson Dock area walks. Cockersand Abbey is situated near the mouth of the River Cocker and is a ruined 12th-century Premonstratensian monastery on a headland overlooking the estuary of the River Lune.

In 1180 this lonely spot housed a hermitage occupied by Hugh Garth, known as 'a hermit of great perfection'. Garth's reputation as a holy man prompted the foundation of a hospital to care for sick people, including lepers as 'the Hospital of St Mary on the marsh' belonging to Leicester Abbey. A decade later the hospital was enlarged to become a priory. The priory attracted enough endowments that it was raised to the status of an abbey.

The abbey was built with red sandstone. We know a little about the abbey layout. The church was a long rectangular building with transepts but without aisles. A Lady Chapel was built close by in the 14th century. To the church's south stood a cloister and ranges of domestic buildings.



In 1539 a new Act of Parliament spelled the end for all the remaining monasteries in England and Wales. On 29 January 1539, the last abbot of Cockersand, Robert Poulton, and his 22 canons signed the document of surrender, marking the end for Cockersand Abbey.

## Heysham Monastery - St Patrick's Chapel, Heysham

The ruined chapel stands on a prominent rock, overlooking Morecambe Bay. The chapel dates from around 750 AD and it is thought that the chapel was built to serve a monastic community. All that remains is the south wall containing a doorway and the east wall. Close to the chapel, and chiefly south of it, are burial grounds in which 85 sets of bones were found.

St Patrick's Chapel is a Scheduled Ancient Monument and is now owned by the National Trust, as are adjacent burial grounds, the Rock Hewn Graves and a part of Heysham Head.



Rock Hewn Graves

Close by at St Peter's church, there are further traces of an early medieval significance to this location, including a hogback stone and other sculptural fragments. It is believed that a church was founded on this site in the 7th or 8th century. In 1080 it was recorded that the location was the site of an old Anglo-Saxon church. Some of the fabric of that church remains in the present church.



The Viking hogback stone explained...

The hogback stone has survived from the time of the Vikings. Originally the hogback stone stood outside the church. It marked the grave of an important Viking, who was buried shortly after the Vikings settled, around 1000 AD.

**Barbara S**

## On the Track Conder Green

This article is the fifth of the series of articles that I have investigated on the once thriving railway routes throughout Lancashire that are now redundant. This disused railway track once formed the branch line between Glasson Dock and Lancaster. The line once served the local community and the thriving docks linking Lancaster to a worldwide market.

Navigation up the River Lune to the Port of Lancaster was not easy and it was in 1779, that the Port Commission decided to build a dock/port at the coast. Land was purchased but due to delays it was not until March 1787 that work was completed. When the dock was opened it could hold up to 25 merchant sailing ships. At its height Glasson Dock was the largest port in the north west, importing cotton, sugar, spices and slaves from Africa and the Indies. The goods would be transported from the dock to the Lancaster Canal by horse and wagon and this continued until the docks were eventually linked into the canal system by a 2.5 mile section of canal. The estimated cost of the branch was £34,608, and work began in 1823 and was completed in December 1825.

Trade increased, with the docks taking in 10,000 tons a day by 1830, but the quay was not connected to the railway network until 1883, when a branch line from the LNWR mainline through Lancaster was completed. This branch line also connected St. George's Quay in Lancaster to the mainline. Due to its low-lying nature, the line was prone to flooding. A passenger service left Lancaster Castle Station on the westside down-bay platform, but this ceased in July 1930. There was a station at Conder Green and a private station to serve Ashton Hall for Lord Ashton. The docks declined and the goods service finally stopped in September 1964.

This disused line now forms part of the Lancashire Coastal Way, a 66 mile long distance route extending from Freckleton in the south of the county to Silverdale. Conder Green is also the beginning of the Lune Millennium Cycleway which follows the old railway line alongside the estuary overlooking the River Lune. It is possible to walk along this route but do watch out as it is an extremely popular place for cyclists being a safe place for families to ride. The route takes in panoramic views of the estuary and surrounding area, with many interesting and contrasting birds together with a large variety of plant species.

**Eleanor**

## May is pretty May is mild

By Annette Wynne

May is pretty, May is mild,  
Dances like a happy child;  
Sing out, robin; spring out, flowers;  
April went with all her showers,  
And the world is green again;  
Come out, children, to the glen,  
To the meadows, to the wood,  
For the earth is clean and good,  
And the sky is clear and blue,  
And bright May is calling you!  
May is pretty, May is mild,  
Dances like a happy child,  
On a blessed holiday,  
Come out, children, join the play!

## May Flower

By Emily Dickinson

Pink, small, and punctual,  
Aromatic, low,  
Covert in April,  
Candid in May,

Dear to the moss,  
Known by the knoll,  
Next to the robin  
In every human soul.  
Bold little beauty,  
Bedecked with thee,  
Nature forswears  
Antiquity.



The May Flower

**Submitted Maggie A**

## Walking in the Brock Valley

The Spring Vale Ramblers walk on Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> May follows a short length of the River Brock heading north east from Bilsborrow, but only touches a small section of the wooded valley. The Brock Valley footpath fully extends from the village of Brock on the A6 passing New Bridge up to Weavers Farm at Bleasdale, a small farm in the shadow of Fair Snape Fell. This is a distance of 5.3 miles. To explore the valley more extensively, then I would suggest parking on the small Brock Valley Picnic Site Car Park on Brock Mill Lane Claughton PR3 0PP. From here well-signed paths lead off in every direction, making this site a good starting point for you to explore further afield at a leisurely pace.

The well-maintained footpath is push chair and wheelchair accessible but cycling through this area is not allowed. It is a beautiful spot, with the River Brock flowing through the mixed native woodland and more open meadow areas supporting a range of wildflowers and birds - the river itself is prime Dipper and Grey Wagtail territory. Much of the river is shallow and pebbly, and this makes it an ideal spot for kids to paddle and play safely.

Walking down the riverbank in a southerly direction the ruined remains of Brock Bottoms Mill are revealed, an interesting reminder of Lancashire's industrial history. The mill was built in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century to use the power of the River Brock to drive cotton spinning machinery. At this time of year, the surrounding woodland is filled with masses of bluebells, spreading out in every direction, turning the forest floor into a carpet of blue. They emit a strong perfume that overwhelms the nostrils with their scent as it wafts on a light breeze.



A Carpet of Bluebells

Heading off in a northerly direction the path winds close to the river and eventually emerges into spectacular open countryside with a backdrop of Fairsnape and Parlick. If the path going through Weavers Farm is followed across the field, the hamlet of Bleasdale with the once smallest primary school in England is reached. The school closed in 2019 and its owners are now considering what other use the building can be put to. Walking further up the track the small church of St Eadmer's Church is passed. The church was rebuilt in 1835 and enlarged in 1897. St Eadmer's Church has a unique dedication, celebrating the Northumbrian monk who discovered the site of Durham Cathedral, the final resting place of St Cuthbert of Lindisfarne.



Fair Snape and Parlick

Continuing up the lane heading to the fells, a right turn by Vicarage Farm across fields and through 3 kissing gates on a concessionary path leads to the Bleasdale Circle. The Bleasdale Circle is a Bronze Age timber structure consisting of two circles set within one another. The Circle was discovered in 1898 by Shadrach Jackson and Thomas Kelsall. Excavation of the inner circle revealed posts, poles and a grave. In 1924 the site was scheduled as an Ancient Monument but it was not until 1935 that the outer circle and the area between the circles was excavated. At this time the inner circle posts were replaced by concrete ones. Four of the posts were moved to the Harris Museum, Preston.

Retrace your steps back to the car park.



The Bleasdale Circle

Michael C