

# Ramblers Gems



A Spring Vale Rambling Class Publication

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## The Longest Day

This year, the Midsummer solstice occurs on Monday, June 21, marking the start of summer in the Northern Hemisphere. The sun will rise in London at 4.43am and will then set at 9.21pm, giving a day length of 16 hours, 38 minutes and 21 seconds. The longest "day," means the longest period of sunlight hours. The date marks the official beginning of summer in the Northern Hemisphere, occurring when the Earth arrives at the point in its orbit where the North Pole is at its maximum tilt (about 23.5 degrees) toward the Sun, resulting in the longest day and shortest night of the calendar year.

The word "solstice" comes from the Latin solstitium- from sol (Sun) and stitium (still or stopped).

At Stonehenge on the midsummer solstice, the sun rises behind the Heel Stone in the north-east part of the horizon and its first rays shine into the heart of the Stonehenge monument..

Michael C

## Latest Restrictions

The latest announcement presented by the Prime Minister was to impose a 4-week delay in lifting the current restriction from Monday 21 June.

What this means for Spring Vale Rambling Class is: we will continue with our current system of members only on all our walks and booking is required. A list of all members attending the walks will be kept, allowing for contact tracing. A risk assessment will be carried out and social distancing will be observed. Facemasks must be worn if you enter any retail premises and hand washing, and sanitisation is also required.

The PM likens it to a car journey with a road map to guide us through it all. As these delay dates are announced by the Government and they keep changing the information in a bid to keep us safe, we have all had to respond as it affects our plans to revert to the norm. This reminds us of when we took our children on those trips in the car. They would be fine for the first couple of hours but then as time goes on and there seems to be no end in sight, they would start with the odd question at first. "DAD where did you say we are going?" "How many miles have we done?" "How long has it been since we set off?" and then after a further short period of silence it would really start and they would begin to drive you bonkers with their persistent questions of "Are we there yet?" "How much further do we have to go?" and "How much longer before we get there?"

The questions sound similar to the ones asked by people today. "How much longer before we go back to normal?" And "What date will it be lifted?"

Michael C

## Summer Solstice & Midsummers Day

Humans may have observed the summer solstice as early as the Stone Age. Celebrations date back to; ancient Ireland, over 5,000 years ago, Ancient Egyptian religions, Greeks, Romans, and the Anglo-Saxon calendar. It ties back to the ancient Celtic society's reliance on agriculture and crops and an appreciation for the sun is what brought people closer to nature and furthered their understanding of the environment. Cultures around the world still celebrate the day with feasts, bonfires, picnics and songs.

The Summer Solstice (24<sup>th</sup> June) is the perfect time of year for new beginnings and inner reflections. Take advantage of the longest day of the year by trying something new or use this time to reflect on how your year has gone so far.

One of the things that people have been doing through the ages, is waking up at dawn to greet the sunrise. Whether you are an early riser or not, if the sky is clear, find a high spot to watch the sun go up.

As a time of inner reflection, use this day to make a list of all the things you'd like to do over the summer. Whether it's more walking, exercise, or eating healthier and you could make a list of all the things you've wanted to do but never had the chance or time for. Now is the perfect time! And finally, to end the day watch the sun go down.



Ring of Brodgar, Orkney 18th June 2018 ©BS

In *Christian times*, *Midsummer's Eve*, 23<sup>rd</sup> June, is celebrated as *Saint John's Eve*. You could plant some St John's Wort (chase devil) to protect yourself or some heather for the bees.

Bees love the nectar of Midsummer heather flowers and make honey from it. To find their way from the hive to the heather and back, bees navigate by means of the Sun, which lead the Celts to believe them to be messengers of the Gods, travelling the path of sunlight to and from the spirit world. The Celts also believed that evil spirits and demons could be banished at midsummer. Mysticism and magic are a common theme in midsummer folklore across the world.



St John's Wort

Midsummer was a crucial time of year for the Vikings, who would meet to discuss legal matters and resolve disputes. A time when most foreign trade took place and Vikings went off on fishing and raiding expeditions. Skalds, singers and poets, would recite sagas and poems of the history of the Viking people. Musicians would get people dancing.

Midsummer (21<sup>st</sup> June) marks the turning of the year when days begin to shorten. The festival is the source of many kinds of ritual and celebration all over Scotland but is primarily a Celtic fire festival for blessing the crops and beasts of the land with fire, generally by walking them around the fire in a sunwise direction. It was customary for people to jump through the fires, folklore suggesting that the height reached by the most athletic jumper, would be the height of that year's harvest.

It is perhaps no wonder that I have such a love of nature, the environment, sailing, and being outdoors by way of my ancestry and midsummer birthday although I have never tried raiding expeditions or jumping through fire!

The Summer Solstice and Midsummer is a time to get together and celebrate, so gather your friends and enjoy the evenings and long daylight hours by feasting outside.

Enjoy the 21<sup>st</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> and then celebrate by joining friends on the SVRC Scorton Tea and Scones walk on Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> June. Members Only Booking required.

**Barbara S**

## Midsummer's Day

by Christian Laccdael

Fairies' power is its strongest,  
When the day is at its longest,  
Around the flames of a bonfire,  
The night's magic will transpire,  
Our thanks gets given to the sun,  
Before long summer will be done,  
Long summer days we will soon miss,  
The sunlight ebbs past the solstice,  
Once the sun appears in the East,  
It's time to ready for a feast,

Stay out long into the evening,  
There's festivities and dancing,  
Spent within the warm evening air,  
There are smiles to share everywhere,  
It's light close to the midnight hour,  
Into the night the evening blurs.

Contribution by Pesto Cenorr

## On The Track Garstang - Pilling Line

This is the ninth in a series of articles on the once thriving railway routes throughout Lancashire that later would become redundant.

There was a line that ran between the Garstang/Catterall station, which was situated on the now West Coast Main Line through the Garstang Road Halt (Garstang Town) all the way to Pilling and Knot End on the coast. This branch line opened in two stages, from Garstang & Catterall to Pilling on 5 December 1870 and from Pilling to Knott End on 29 July 1908.

Road transport had a detrimental effect on railway passenger numbers and by the late 1920s the service was uneconomic. The LMS withdrew the passenger service from 31 March 1930. The Goods services continued, All services between Garstang Town and Pilling ceased from 1 August 1963 following the Beeching Cuts and the track was lifted shortly afterwards.

The only section of this route which is still walkable is the part from the River Wyre at Garstang heading towards the M6 motorway. It is this section that we will follow on the Tea and Cake Ramble this Saturday.

**Eleanor**

## Tolkien Country

It was on the Grace and Henry Culverhouse memorial walk on the 12th of June 2021 that the Spring Vale Ramblers passed one of the most well-known historical sites in Lancashire, that of Stonyhurst College. This is one of the finest Roman Catholic boarding schools in the country containing many buildings of historic importance. The oratory was built on the site around 1372, but the main building as we see today was started by Hugh Shireburne in 1523, with late additions including a gatehouse being added in 1592 and then was later modified in 1690.

Stonyhurst College contains many treasures; the oldest being a 7<sup>th</sup> century copy of St. John's Gospel which belonged to St Cuthbert.



The author J.R.R Tolkien taught at the school for a time, and it is believed the area inspired his saga Lord of the Rings. Certainly, some local names appear in his novel, the most obvious being the name Shire.

The cluster of houses known as Kemple End, are all that remain of the village of Morton, first recorded in 1276. Longrigde Fell is the most southerly named fell in Britain and coming down from the fell the bridleway passes Crowshaw House. It was during the vicious conflict of the past between Catholics and Protestants, that a priest was discovered saying the mass at nearby Chaigley. He was beheaded with his head being thrown over a fence. A lady from Crowshaw House recovered it along with objects from the chapel including, missal, altar cloth, vestments and candles, which were preserved as relics by the family.



**Tony C**

## The Charcoal Burners

A few days ago, Dave and myself were walking around the Roddlesworth plantation area of Tockholes and we were delighted to discover the charcoal kilns in action. I remember seeing these on a SVRC winter walk well before the COVID lockdown. A small business operating as Greenwood Twiggs has authority from United Utilities the landowner, to coppice and work these woodlands and produce charcoal. Coppicing is a way of managing woodlands in a sustainable way so that the woodland provides a different habitat throughout its stages for animals, insects and plants and also provides the charcoal worker with materials with which to work.

Even in ancient times, charcoal was manufactured in kilns. Logs were arranged in a conical heap (a charcoal kiln or pile) around posts, a fire shaft was made using brushwood and wood chips and covered with an airtight layer of grass, moss and earth. The pile was ignited inside the fire shaft and, at a temperature of between 300 and 350 °C, the carbonization process began. The process took six to eight days - in large kilns several weeks - during which time the charcoal burner had to control the draught (by piercing small holes and resealing them), being careful neither to allow the pile to go out nor let it go up in flames. By observing the smoke exiting the kiln, the charcoal burner could assess the state of the carbonization process. If the smoke was thick and grey, the wood was still raw; thin, blue smoke indicated good carbonization.

The charcoal at Roddlesworth is produced in a steel ring kiln with a lid and marketed under the name British Barbecue Charcoal.



wrote a poem entitled "The Charcoal Burner" appearing in his collection of verse *Now We Are Six*,

*The charcoal-burner has tales to tell,  
He lives in the Forest,  
Alone in the Forest;  
He sits in the Forest,  
Alone in the Forest.  
And the sun comes slanting between the trees,*

*And the rabbits come up, and they give him good-morning,  
And the rabbits come up and say, "Beautiful morning."  
And the moon swings clear of the tall black trees,  
And the owls fly over and wish him good-night  
Quietly over to wish him good-night. . . .*

*And he sits and thinks of the things they know,  
He and the Forest, alone together---  
The springs that come and the summers that go,  
Autumn dew on bracken and heather,  
The drip of the Forest beneath the snow. . . .*

*All the things they have seen,  
All the things they have heard:  
An April sky swept clean and the song of a bird. . .  
Oh, the charcoal-burner has tales to tell!  
And he lives in the Forest and knows us well.*

The burners are to be found just off the path running to the east of the River Roddlesworth locally known as Rocky Brook. Just follow your nose and the sweet smell of burning wood as it drifts through the plantation.

**Julie Cooper**

## The Sense of Sound

For most people, the choice of which route to take when preparing for a walk is usually based upon the sense of sight. An incredible view is usually key in the decision making. I would like to offer a series of articles based on types of areas that we often cover on our walks but using the sense of hearing. The sounds of birds are all around us if we would only listen.

So, let's start with the Dawn Chorus. At this time of the year it is extremely noticeable as it starts an hour before the sun rises over the horizon. As with all professional choirs they start with that most important warm up session and as the days begin to lengthen and more birds arrive, the choir continues to grow. Newly arrived migrant birds offer their own distinctive zing-pings, trills, kee-orrs and tweets and the choir's range and volume continues to build layer upon layer. Although no one can explain the Dawn Chorus as it doesn't have a real purpose but one thing that is for sure is that the songbirds are so glad to be alive and they sing their songs to the rising sun with absolute gusto! They are trying their hardest to wake up the world with their vocals but perhaps it's not that they are getting up early but it's them having NOT been to bed yet!

### THE SONG THRUSH

This bird is a true professional and is a typical crooner around the garden. He belts out every number from his repertoire likes it's the finale at a grand show. He has perfected his song over the years continually adding, polishing his performance and delivering it with heartfelt zeal. To him it doesn't matter if he is headlining at the Royal Albert Hall or just singing in the shower. Every piece of poetry, sonnet or recital of his life story is belted out on full volume.



### THE ROBIN

You may only associate the robin with Christmas but he sings his song all year round and if you listen carefully you can hear his wide range of numbers. Of course there are carols, aggressive fast numbers, golden oldies and ballads as soft as freshly fallen snow. The robins' greatest hits play an important role in gardens or parks. When you hear his voice, you can immediately build up a picture of the landscape. There will be lots of low-lying bushes for him to hide under but with a number of posts or fences for him to perch on to show off his plumage will he sings.



So if you are planning an early morning walk just throw open your window and listen to the advice that you are getting from these two chaps. They are full of knowledge and are always keen to share. Over the next few weeks just similar to a SVRC walk, we will visit moorland, fields, riverbank, woodland and seaside and try to identify just which birds are associated with which type of countryside. Pheasants, Skylarks, Herring Gulls, Oystercatchers, Swallows, Canada Geese, Peregrines, Dippers and Bitterns will all be lining up to try to grab the limelight.

Keen not to be left out of this game they will all want to be included. They will want everyone to know what type of habitat they live in and who else lives within that same environment.

Come and join me on my walk to sense the sound of birds.

**Maggie A**