

Ramblers Gems



A Spring Vale Rambling Class Publication

Volume 2 Issue 30

23rd July 2021

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

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 Current Restrictions Lifted**
The Tower gets a Facelift
- 2 Ramblers Tips – Plantain /July**
- 3 A Strange Tale**
- 4 25 Ways of Walking**
- 5 The Sense of Sound - on the Edge of Woodland**

Current Restrictions Lifted

The latest government guidelines issued on Monday 19th July 2021 has lifted lockdown and we are now at Step 4. This is in line with the road map that we have all been following for these many months.

It is still important to be safe, considerate and responsible while we carry on with our walks that we all enjoy.

Our group walks can now take place with any number of members taking part. Our limit on numbers previously was 30 and from experience and asking everyone to book a place rather than just attend, the average number of people on the walk has been 15.

We are now able to operate without the need for members to book a place on the walk although we will still maintain a register of all those attending. We will maintain social distancing and a risk assessment will also be carried out for each walk.

Michael C

The Tower gets a Facelift

The work to restore and repair Darwen Tower, is now officially underway. The work is possible due to part funding by the Darwen Town Deal and money raised by the Darwen Rotary Club.

Due to its exposed location the Tower is in need of substantial repairs to restore it to its former glory. The renovation works including repairs on the rainwater disposal system, repairs to the deck of the upper observation level, improvements to access and much more.

The work was originally scheduled to start in April but was put back because of the discovery of nesting birds in the immediate vicinity to this Grade II listed building and permission from Natural England was required to undertake work on the moors. This approval was needed because the Tower stands in a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), a status granted because of its local animals and plants life.



Now Natural England have approved the works and an ornithologist has agreed a plan for them to proceed without disturbing the nesting birds.

The works are due for completion by the end of September.

Michael C

Ramblers Tips - Plantain

You have probably been out walking and brushed up against the leaves of a stinging nettle and someone within the group has grabbed a nearby dock leaf.

Next time ask them to grab some plantain leaf, bruise it with their fingernails and hand it to you to put on the sting and you will find that this gives you relief within minutes.

If while out walking and are unfortunate to obtain a bee sting you can grab a plantain leaf and make a poultice to bring immediate relief to the pain and inflammation. Plantain has a reputation for drawing the poison out of a wound. The sooner you act the faster the relief.

Plantain is a broad leaf species known for its amazing healing properties. It was so renowned for healing that settlers took it with them when they travelled to North America from the “Old Country.” and was called “Whiteman’s footprint” by the First Nations due to its prevalence near to their settlements.

Broad Leaf Plantain (*Plantago major*) grows in disturbed areas such as lawns, gardens, roadsides, ditches, and on the sides of brooks and streams. Plantain is edible when young as a salad green, but the leaves become fibrous as the plants grow older. The fibrous sinews in the leaves and stems are flexible and strong. These can be separated from the leaves and used to make cordage, fishing line, or sutures in a survival situation.



So next time you are going out on a walk, think plantain for that herbal remedy, as a fresh poultice, and for survival needs!

Barbara S

JULY

by George Meredith

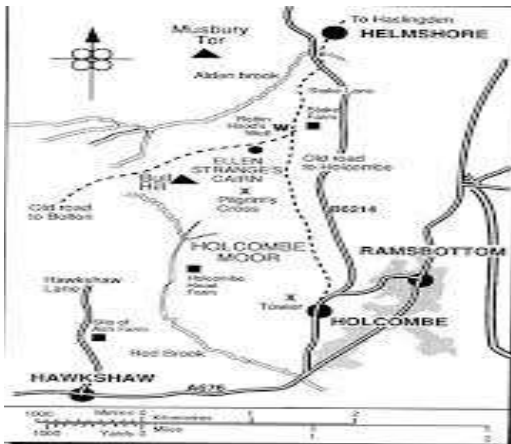
Blue July, bright July,
Month of storms and gorgeous blue;
Violet lightnings o'er thy sky,
Heavy falls of drenching dew;
Summer crown! o'er glen and glade
Shrinking hyacinths in their shade;
I welcome thee with all thy pride,
I love thee like an Eastern bride.
Though all the singing days are done
As in those climes that clasp the sun;
Though the cuckoo in his throat
Leaves to the dove his last twin note;
Come to me with thy lustrous eye,
Golden-dawning oriently,
Come with all thy shining blooms,
Thy rich red rose and rolling glooms.
Though the cuckoo doth but sing 'cuk, cuk,'
And the dove alone doth coo;
Though the cushat spins her coo-r-roo, r-r-roo -
To the cuckoo's halting 'cuk.'

Sweet July, warm July!
Month when mosses near the stream,
Soft green mosses thick and shy,
Are a rapture and a dream.
Summer Queen! whose foot the fern
Fades beneath while chestnuts burn;
I welcome thee with thy fierce love,
Gloom below and gleam above.
Though all the forest trees hang dumb,
With dense leafiness o'ercome;
Though the nightingale and thrush,
Pipe not from the bough or bush;
Come to me with thy lustrous eye,
Azure-melting westerly,
The raptures of thy face unfold,
And welcome in thy robes of gold!
Tho' the nightingale broods—'sweet-chuck-sweet' -
And the ouzel flutes so chill,
Tho' the throistle gives but one shrilly trill
To the nightingale's 'sweet-sweet.'

Contributor Pesto Cennor

A Strange Tale

Spring Vale Ramblers have often walked along footpaths on Holcombe Moor, but on one of these paths leaving the moor across Beetle Hill, heading towards Helmshore stands a stone pillar next to a cairn. This pile of stones traditionally marks the place where a woman, Ellen Strange, was murdered in 1761. Strange was her maiden name. The circumstances of her death and the trial of her murderer were, for many years, the subject of local folklore with conflicting stories being told. However, thanks to work by author John Simpson and Helmshore Local History Society, the true story can now be told.



Ellen seems to have been murdered just after midnight on 26th January 1761. Two days later there was an inquest at Stake Farm, close to where her body had been found. The inquest decided that her husband John Broadley was guilty, he was arrested and sent for trial at the Lent assizes at Lancaster Castle.

It's likely that the prosecution was carried out by Fletcher Norton, King's attorney and sergeant at arms for the County Palatine of Lancaster. Witnesses called in the case against Broadley included Lawrence Elton, the Tottington constable that had indicted him; Roger Booth, a Tottington doctor who had examined Ellen's body; Alice Ellison, an innkeeper's wife from Haslingden and John Rothwell from nearby Holcombe Head Farm. The records don't show what the witnesses said.

The outcome was that John Broadley was acquitted, due to lack of evidence.

The speculation is that Ellen was heading to her parents' farm at Hawkshaw after a quarrel with her husband. Her husband caught up with her and killed

her on Holcombe Moor. A stake may have been put into position to mark the place of her death, and this was later replaced with stones to make a cairn.

The folklore that has arisen about the story tells a very different tale. On the Ordnance Survey map of 1844-7 there is a cairn marked 'Ellen Strange'. The first written reference to the incident is a poem from 1872 published by John Fawcett Skelton. It tells the story of how Ellen fell in love with a pedlar (referred to as a 'packman' and a 'Scot' in the poem – a muddled meaning of 'Scotchman', a term often given to pedlars.) In this version it was he who killed her.

Just three years later in 1875, the Bacup Times published a story saying it was her lover that murdered her. He was caught at Haslingden, tried and found guilty at Lancaster and hung. This grim tale has his body put in a gibbet on Holcombe Moor.

A stone pillar (a sort of modern wayside cross) was erected next to the cairn. It has a slight, falling figure on it to depict Ellen and the initials ES. This has now become subject of folklore itself, with people saying it is an ancient waymarker depicting Mary and the baby Jesus (although where Mary is supposed to be is anyone's guess – perhaps they think she's been removed.) So the myths continue...

In November 2015, forty people gathered by the Ellen Strange memorial and cairn. They were members of the Unite union, campaigners against domestic violence, victims of abuse and members of the church, there to commemorate what had happened on that night so long ago.

There is now an annual Ellen Strange Memorial Walk that raises money for the Endeavour Project that works to end domestic abuse.



Michael C

25 Ways of Walking

We all enjoy going out for a walk and here is a list of different names for all the styles of walking Spring Vale Ramblers members regularly undertake.

1. **Amble** walk leisurely, looking at your surroundings and enjoying the scenery.
2. **Bimble** walking along without any clear thought of where you might end up and just enjoying the freedom of the day. Just ask Jane.
3. **Falter** move hesitatingly, as if about to give way. This usually when on a ridge and moving down a steep section of hillside.
4. **Flounder** walk with great difficulty. Something we all do after a long day on the fells.
5. **Limp** walk impeded by some physical injury. Usually when we have a pebble in our boots.
6. **Lumber** move heavily or clumsily. This can happen when we are carrying too much in our rucksacks.
7. **Lurch** move suddenly or as if unable to control one's movements. This unsteady swaying movement to one side is sometimes mistaken for intoxication.
8. **Meander** move or cause to move in a winding or curving course. This often happens when we are trying to avoid a wet and boggy patch.
9. **Parade** march in a procession as we are walking through a meadow or crop field, all in single file.
10. **Prowl** move about as if in a predatory manner. Your cat normally does this, and you are just copying his favourite style of walking.
11. **Ramble** walk for pleasure in the countryside. Something we do all the time while out enjoying our beautiful countryside.
12. **Saunter** walk leisurely and with no apparent aim, this we often do while out window shopping.
13. **Skulk** move stealthily as if trying to conceal yourself whilst loitering. This is often the case when we are in the wrong field and just hope the farmer doesn't spot us.

14. **Somnambulate** walk in one's sleep. This is a walk I hope you don't undertake too often.

15. **Stagger** walk with great difficulty. Usually after consuming various amounts of alcohol.

16. **Stalk** walk in a stately or imposing manner or for those of us that can't do that we will just have to pursue or track in a stealthily way.

17. **Stride** walks with long steps. This can happen on a walk when you get left behind and have to rush to catch up with the rest of the group.

18. **Stroll** walk leisurely and without real purpose. This usually happens while at the seaside along the promenade enjoying a sea view.

19. **Strut** walk in a proud, confident way. As we like to do when overtaking a slower walking party.

20. **Stumble** miss a step and fall or nearly fall. When this happens, we always manage to find the muddy patch on which to break our fall.

21. **Swagger** walk with a lofty proud gait. This can happen when you finish a long-distance footpath or after a walk when you have achieved your goal.

22. **Totter** move without being stable, as if threatening to fall. This can happen when crossing steppingstones or a wibberly wobbly suspension bridge.

23. **Trudge** walk heavily and firmly, as when weary, or through mud. This often happens on a wet day as we struggle with the last mile.

24. **Waddle** walk unsteadily rolling your body weight from side to side as you move on your way. Can't think who this reminds me of.

25. **Wade** walk through relatively shallow water. This can happen if you have ever walked across Morecambe Bay.

I am sure that you can think of many more definitions for the styles of walking we undertake. Just drop me an email with your suggestions for an extended list.

Glenda B

The Sense of Sound - on the Edge of Woodland

This is the sixth in my series of articles based on typical walks undertaken by the Spring Vale Rambling Class, where I will concentrate on what you hear and not just what you can see. A ramble where you would see and hear this group of birds would be on a short evening stroll from Sunnyhurst Wood over to Ryal Fold in Tockholes and then back on the slopes of Darwen Moors towards Bold Venture Park.

Blue Tit

As you are working your way on one of the many paths through Sunnyhurst Wood you may spot this little chap. Very easy to recognise as there are many houses close to this spot and you will know him from his many visits to your garden. Although not renowned for his song more for his high-pitched *cheeps*, *peeps* and *squeedle-deeps*. Usually, people are so used to him being around us that his contribution to the choir blends in like a comfort blanket to a child. He quite often gets lost in the family of Tits, Long Tailed, Bearded, Great, Coal Tits who all may have a more distinctive call, but they could almost have a small choir of their own. As they say the family that sings together flocks together!



Chaffinch

This little bird forms one of the vast armies of nesting birds in trees or hedges using the Woods as its feeding ground of flies, Daddy long legs or the Crane Fly and caterpillars as a way to feed its young in Summer. Later on, in the year and over Winter it will revert back to eating seeds usually supplied by the local houses. His song is loud and cheerful, starting slowly with a sweet rattle, accelerating down the scale and ending with a showoff flourish. He will repeat this scale up to ten times a minute. What a talent!! But just listen for his alarm call which is "*pink, pink, pink*".



After spotting this soldier bird, see if you can spot it in flight. It will reward you by flashing his white shoulder patches and wing bar just like any major who has just been awarded military medals and is wearing them with pride!!

Little Owl

Just as you are approaching Ryal Fold you may see this little chap sat meditating on a fence post or just absent-mindedly watching the world go by. If you call out to him with a "Good Day" he will nod his head and courteously reply "*Hullooo!*" Before bobbing off, flying at a low level to a quieter spot where he won't be bothered by nosey well-wishers such as yourself. Although he doesn't possess the most famous of nocturnal calls, he is easily the politest of all of our owls!



Jackdaw

Upon descending from Darwen Tower and approaching the Victorian Villas at the top of Bold Venture Park, you will notice the tall chimneys and the old tall trees that face these individual houses. The perfect hiding spot for our last group of birds on this evening's stroll. They use all of these "Facilities" to feed, insects from the park and gardens and of course any scraps they can steal from the gardens! Their diet includes cereals, potatoes, fruit, berries, insects, worms and mice. Stealing eggs and nestlings from other birds and hiding with rooks and with other all black coloured birds of a similar size they are easily identifiable having a grey nape on its darker grey and black plumage. Their main cry or call is extremely individual with a loud and explosive "*Tchack,*" followed by a long "*Kyaaar*" and then a shrill high pitched "*Keeya*".

After working your way down through the park, you will notice the playground is quiet and still at this time having been full of children's chatter during the day. Even the ice cream man with the constant song of reminder that you need to treat yourself has gone off to leave you in peace. Time to get home for a well-earned cup of tea.



Maggie A