

# Ramblers Gems



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

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## OS Benchmarks

What are the strange marks that are found on the sides of building and walls and what is their purpose?

### Benchmark

These are usually found on buildings especially churches. The symbol consists of a horizontal line with an arrow pointing up to it from below. Cut by Ordnance Survey levelling staff, they were once used to give a network of points from which the height above sea level was precisely measured. There were formally around half a million of these marks on buildings throughout Great Britain; however new mapping techniques have rendered them unnecessary and around half have now disappeared.



## Flush Brackets

Flush brackets are metal plates cemented onto the fronts of buildings and on triangulation pillars. In fact, a type of benchmark, they are spaced at intervals of approximately 1.5km from each. The number visible on each bracket is simply a serial number and does not give its height above sea level.



## Fundamental Bench Marks

With deep foundations, buried chamber and granite pillars, fundamental bench marks are very stable alternatives to the other two markers. There are around 190 of these which are still maintained and used by the OS, they are positioned far apart from each, at a distance of 40km. They form the primary height network and as such are the link to the Ordnance Datum at Newlyn and are still critical in defining this reference system today. The Newlyn Tidal Observatory is the home of mean sea level for mainland Great Britain. A fundamental benchmark can be found at Duxon Hill in the village of Hoghton.



Michael C

## River Kent, Canal and Country Walk part 2.

This walk was successfully completed on Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> August and this description follows on from part 1 from Issue 33. The walk is full of social and industrial heritage, and we pick up the route walking south along the dewatered Lancaster canal.

We leave the Northern reaches of the Lancaster canal behind and head over fields towards Well Heads Lane, to reach Tunnel Hill. The clue is in the name. A short detour brings us to the **Hincaster Tunnel** on the Lancaster Canal. This section of the canal was opened in 1819, with the route going through Hincaster to serve the gunpowder works at Sedgwick. The Hincaster Tunnel was completed on Christmas Day 1817. Faced with limestone and lined with 4 million locally made bricks, it is 377 yards long. It was cheaper to build without a towpath, so the boatmen would “walk” or “leg” the barges through the tunnel. The horses being led over the hill on a horsepath – now appropriately a bridleway. The tunnel portals are listed buildings and the horsepath classified as an ancient monument. Shortly after the canal was opened, railways began to take precedence and the canal fell into decline in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century.



Hincaster Tunnel Entrance

The route now passes **Hincaster Hall**, which is a gorgeous Late C16 farmhouse, which was extended in the C18. There are mullioned windows, and an original plaque in a fireplace has the initials AM 1660.

Our way now gives views over to Witherslack and Yewbarrow as the path descends to joins the A590 at Levens.

We glimpse **Levens Hall** with its topiary garden through the trees. A Pele Tower existed on this site in 1562, being altered around 1580. The hall and gardens laid out today retain much of the original design from 1689 – 1712 by Guillaume Beaumont, who was commissioned by Colonel James Grahme to design the gardens and park. The Grahme family maintained the estate for many years, subsequently passing to the Bagot family in 1997 who are in ownership today.

It is the largest Elizabethan house in the county and retains a fine interior.



Levens Hall

**Levens Park** – now Levens Deer Park, was also laid out by Beaumont and was described in 1776 as “a happy combination of everything that is lovely and great in landscape” by William Gilpin. It featured avenues of trees and paths running alongside the River Kent. The turnpike construction in 1750’s divided the hall from the park land and the A6 does the same today. The Park now is home to deer and the Bagot family goats.



Levens Park

Our path took us through the park, where we saw deer but no goats, onto Park Head and then a short road walk brought us back to the cars parked on the layby near to the Strickland Arms. There are great cafes at Sizergh Castle and Levens Hall that are well worth a visit after the walk.

**Jane C**

## Ogham Trees

**Hazel** – Coll is the ruler of the 9th Lunar Month, August 5<sup>th</sup> to the 1<sup>st</sup> September, and is represented by the Ogham Letter C. Its powers are *Granting Wisdom and Inspiration, Wishes, Luck, Divination of hidden things, Protection and Fertility.*

**The Hazel (*Corylus avellana*)** is one of the very oldest British native trees. Traces of hazel nut shells and pollen have been discovered in cave settlements, dating from around 10,000 years ago. The tree is associated with the Goddess Brighid, goddess of wisdom and divine inspiration.

Hazel trees in hedgerows often grow in a bush-like form, especially when they are young. In woodlands they nearly always form multiple trunks, looking as if they might have been coppiced (which they sometimes are!). They form an important understorey of spreading green.

Pliable, straight shoots called 'withies' grow up from the base and these are cut for natural fencing, walking sticks, and pinned into shape for shepherd's crooks while still growing. They were once widely used to form the wattle in wattle and daub buildings.

The tree's male flowers are beautiful long golden catkins, heralds of the spring and appearing before the leaves as early as February. The green hazelnuts in their frilly, papery sheaths, begin to ripen at the end of August, and are brown by the end of September.



Hazel Catkins



Green Hazelnuts

The hazel tree has long been relied on as a source of food and were once grown and harvested as a staple food, being ground into a high protein nut flour, and used in breads and puddings, and as a source of well-flavoured Vitamin E rich oil. Hazelnuts are fantastic raw as a healthy snack or chopped up and popped into salads for extra crunch. Blended into butter, they also make a delicious spread on toast or pancakes. It's particularly good drizzled over a sliced banana too!

There is little evidence that the hazel tree has particular medicinal properties. Hazel bears its crop of nuts from late August. If you're picking hazelnuts early in the season when they're still green, the shelled nuts make a tasty nibble to munch on while you're out walking.



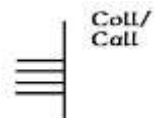
Hazel is the Tree of Wisdom and Knowledge and one of the 'chieftain' trees of the Irish Celtic tradition. The cutting down of an ancient hazel could once have been punishable by death!

On 14th of September, once known as Holy Cross Day or Holy Rood Day, children traditionally went to pick hazel nuts. The day was a school holiday, a custom that only died out after the First World War, around the 1920's.

- Hazel nuts given to a bride will bring many babies!
- Make a circlet of pliable hazel twigs and leaves. Wear it in any ritual when you desire a wish to be granted.
- Nuts, twigs or bark can be used in an incense to bring concentration and sharpen mental powers.
- Even the smallest twigs or slithers of hazel wood will protect a house from fire and lightning.
- Carry a hazelnut in its shell to ward off aches and pains caused by damp, cold weather.

Hazelnuts are an important food source for lots of wildlife squirrels, dormice, wood mice and bank voles. Woodpeckers and nuthatches will push hazelnuts into crevices to stabilise the nut so they can hammer at them more easily.

Jean G





## Boots made for Walking

The time will come when you need to replace those old boots that are now letting in water or are down at the heel and beyond repair. You may even be looking to invest in a pair of walking boots to begin your new pastime.

So here are a few tips for selecting the correct walking footwear.

### 1. Go For Decent Price and Quality

As a general rule the price of a pair of boots will directly reflect the quality of the footwear — so be prepared to invest in good quality, as it will be money well spent.

### 2. Reputable Retailer

Always visit a reputable outdoor retailer with staff trained in fitting footwear. Ask a fellow walker for recommendation and check out which shops offer discounts. Before you part with your cash it is always worth asking if they will apply a discount for a rambling club member.

### 3. Shop in the Afternoon

It's true, the time of day that you go shopping for your new boots is vitally important to a successful retail expedition! Our feet expand throughout the day. And the change can be quite pronounced in some individuals.

### 4. Avoid Online Shopping

Don't be tempted to buy a 'bargain' pair of walking boots from an online retailer - you won't know if they will be the right fit for your individual shape of feet. Always best to try before you buy.

### 5. Comfort Is the Key

When buying your first pair of boots it is worth choosing comfort over durability. Don't be tempted to select a tough pair of boots simply to get your money's worth because they will last longer. So go for comfort. After you have been walking for a while, your feet will start to toughen up — which means you will be able to invest in tougher footwear in the future.



### 6. Leather Or Fabric?

Leather is tough, durable and breathable - allowing moisture from sweating to escape out of the boots. However, continual advances in materials mean many boots are now made using new fabrics that also offer toughness, durability, breathability, and comfort. Fabric footwear will not be as tough or as durable as leather footwear but will almost certainly offer better comfort and breathability.

### 7. Break Your Boots In!

This is all about moulding your boots to your own feet – making them more comfortable and reducing the chance of blisters. Wear your new boots around your house at every opportunity in order to soften them up.

### 8. A Supporting Role

Many outdoor retailers now stock “trekking shoes”. They may look and feel very comfortable, but they do not provide the necessary ankle support offered by boots.

### 9. Summer Or Winter?

Many of the characteristics making a shoe ideal for summer use also make it unsuitable for the winter – and vice versa. Four-season footwear is available but will often not offer as much comfort in summer or durability in winter as boots that are specifically designed for seasonal use.

### 10. Don't Forget Your Socks

Don't just invest time and money in your boots – make sure you do the same when it comes to choosing your socks.

**Eleanor**

## The Wonder of Sheep Dogs

How many times have we been out on a Spring Vale Ramblers walk and looked across to a distant hillside and observed white specks that appeared to miraculously move through the heather and bracken down the hillside for no apparent reason? Then to discover the driving force behind this seemingly natural progression was in fact being stage managed by a single black and white collie dog!

How does this working dog achieve the impossible for although I observed a farmer in the vicinity, it was apparent that he was not directing the animal and the dog appeared to be carrying out the task alone.

I decided to investigate how sheepdogs achieve this by having a chat with a shepherd I know - Robert!

This is what I discovered concerning how the best dogs are trained.

A good dog is one that responds to instructions, but this can take days or months to train depending upon the individual dog. Training could be to voice commands or whistles, but all training needs to be consistent and to discipline them in the same everyday language, talking to them all the time works better and avoids getting the dog confused.

Show patience and once the dog has been given an instruction you must wait for the dog to respond. Don't move on until he/she has carried out your instruction. Repetition is the key. Sometimes when training a dog, it's the trainers who need a little more help, not the dog. The trainer may not know how to do it, they may not be aware of the dog's ability, but a dog can be trained to do or work anything.

The natural inborn impulse of all dogs is to hunt but the natural instinct of the Welsh Border Collie is to gather together, to herd. It is just built into their DNA.

A difficult manoeuvre for all sheep dogs is to push sheep away, to drive them, for they naturally want to gather them together. All dogs are not necessarily drivers of sheep, but they will need to show they can be both drivers and gatherers before they are set to work on the hills and this training could take days, weeks or months depending upon the dog's intelligence.



The two most important commands for all dogs to conquer are "lie" and "come back" but for working dogs that are "working at a distance", "sit", "come back" and "stay at heel" are the additional instructions to master. Usually, it works better to train a dog alone but occasionally taking another dog to show the new dog the ropes can be useful. Some dogs can be too kind to sheep and the sheep soon realise this and take advantage, so the dog needs to show they mean business, but without showing aggression! There may only be one dog in a litter that will fully make the grade to become a top-class sheepdog.

All dogs entered into sheepdog trials are working dogs and in order to maintain high standards, they have to be continually worked. Most people don't realise that it is normal for a good dog to go out and look for sheep in bracken and ferns by themselves and for up to 2 hours at a time. The dog needs to know what is expected of him/her without always having the shepherd in view. Although whistles are used in trials, this doesn't work in the day-to-day reality on a hillside. Commands by whistle are only put in to slow the pace down - to put on the brakes on the dog.

Dogs get to know their hill and some start as early as 10 months and can be working the same hill for up to 12 years. Dogs can show themselves to be over keen, but keenness is vital, or they will give in too easily if the sheep don't respond. The best dogs are good with sheep and cattle but training them first with geese soon gets the dog working quickly.

Some individuals worry about spoiling a working dog but petting them or talking to them continues to develop them and is vital in maintaining that mental connection with a dog and the owner. Then they will continue to listen to instruction. When training never shout at the dog, or it will only respond when you shout your loudest. It is vital that you have made the right choice with your dog and above all remember *'there is a man/woman for every dog, and a dog for every man/woman.'*

**Glenda B**