

Ramblers Gems



A Spring Vale Rambling Class Publication

Volume 2 Issue 38

17th September 2021

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The Normans in the Dales

The Spring Vale Ramblers walk on the 2nd October entitled "Limestone Country", passes close to four communities all of which have a history dating back to the Norman conquest and also to the great and prosperous Northern Abbeys. The villages and hamlets are Lancliffe, Stainforth, Feizor and Stackhouses are small communities but have played a significant role in the later prosperity of this part of the Dales.

The tiny hamlet of **Langcliffe** is mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086, when the local lord of the manor was named Fech. In Langcliffe he paid taxes on three areas of ploughland. William the Conqueror had given Craven to Roger de Poitou for his help in the conquest of England. It was after 1102, when de Poitou rebelled and King Henry I confiscated his lands and gave those within the Ribble Valley to the House of Percy.

Stainforth derives its name from the 'stony ford' which linked two settlements half a mile apart on opposite banks of the River Ribble. Stainforth, on the eastern side, was formerly owned by Sawley Abbey, whose monks developed the estate which prospered, while Little Stainforth, under private ownership, declined. It was Samuel Watson who in 1670 replaced the ford by a packhorse bridge whose arch spans a wooded stretch of the river, and a grassy patch leads downstream to Stainforth Force. In Little Stainforth the three-storey Stainforth Hall was built at the same time and is now occupied as a farmhouse.

The tiny hamlet of **Feizor** has a name which means "Fech's summer pasture" who was the prominent local Anglo-Saxon landowner at the time of the Norman conquest. Sheep were allowed to roam free and graze in these meadows, away from the main farmstead.

Stackhouse is a hamlet in the township of Giggleswick and in the year 1160 Adam, son of Meldred, the lord of the Manor of Giggleswick, granted a portion of his land in Stackhouse to the monks of Furness Abbey, with rights "to feed swine, cut timber for building purposes in Giggleswick Wood, and to use the common pastures of Giggleswick and Stackhouse". The monks came to live in the hamlet and later built a corn mill by the river, which caused a dispute with Adam's grandson, Elias. But the hamlet was isolated and remote and in the 13th. century the monks let the land to tenants, who remained in their holdings after the dissolution of the Monasteries.

Come and join on the historic walk and discover the fascinating history of this part of the Yorkshire Dales.

Michael C

Essential Kit for Boys

If you take a look back in time, before computers, mobile phones, etc dominated our lives, to a time of a much simpler age. This was a time when everything a young boy ever needed could be carried in a large tobacco tin handed down from your grandad. The kit would consist of the following items which were built up over time as pocket money or resources permitted.

Swiss Army Knife

The best small penknife that pocket money could buy. It was worth saving up for the high-end model, with as many blades and attachments as you can get. Useful for jobs needing a screwdriver, removing splinters, and opening bottles of beer and wine. (Not a prime consideration at this time). Later in life I found one could be carried within the luggage held in the planes hold. A useful tool when in holiday mode, then the corkscrew came in very handy at times.



Compass

These amazingly simple devices are satisfying to own. A small compact one can be bought from any camping or outdoor shop, and they last forever, as no batteries are required to operate them. You really should know where North is, wherever you are.

Handkerchief

There are many uses for a piece of cloth, from preventing smoke inhalation or helping with a nosebleed, to offering one to a girl when she cries. Big ones can be made into slings. They're worth having tucked into your box as this will stop the contents from rattling around.

Box of matches

You knew you had reached the age of responsibility when you were allowed to have a box of matches. Matches must always be kept dry, keeping them inside a plastic bag can be very useful. Dipping the tips into wax makes them waterproof. Scrape off the wax with a fingernail when you want to light them.

Needle and Thread

There are number of useful things you can do with these, from sewing up a wound on an unconscious dog, to repairing a torn shirt or adding a button. Make sure the thread is strong and then it can be used for fishing.

Pencil and Paper

If you see a crime and want to write down a car number or a description, you are going to need these items. Also, it works for shopping lists or practically anything.

Small Torch

There are ones available for keyrings which are small and light. If you are ever in darkness and trying to read a map, a torch of any kind will be useful.

Magnifying Glass

For general scientific interest, like checking out the legs on a ladybird or looking at the eye of a fly. Can also be used to start a fire, during daylight hours only.



Plasters

Just one or two, or better still, a piece from a cloth plaster roll that can be cut with a penknife or scissors. They probably won't be used, but you never know.

Fishhooks

If you have strong thread and a tiny hook, you only need a stick and a worm to have some chance of catching something. Put the hook-tip into a piece of cork, or you'll snag yourself on it.



Alan R

The Moon and the Yew Tree

Sylvia Plath 1932-1963

This is the light of the mind, cold and planetary.
The trees of the mind are black. The light is blue.
The grasses unload their griefs at my feet as if I were
God,
Prickling my ankles and murmuring of their humility.
Fumy spiritous mists inhabit this place
Separated from my house by a row of headstones.
I simply cannot see where there is to get to.

The moon is no door. It is a face in its own right,
White as a knuckle and terribly upset.
It drags the sea after it like a dark crime; it is quiet
With the O-gape of complete despair. I live here.
Twice on Sunday, the bells startle the sky –
Eight great tongues affirming the Resurrection.
At the end, they soberly bong out their names.

The yew tree points up. It has a Gothic shape.
The eyes lift after it and find the moon.
The moon is my mother. She is not sweet like Mary.
Her blue garments unloose small bats and owls.
How I would like to believe in tenderness –
The face of the effigy, gentled by candles,
Bending, on me in particular, its mild eyes.

I have fallen a long way. Clouds are flowering
Blue and mystical over the face of the stars.
Inside the church, the saints will be all blue,
Floating on their delicate feet over cold pews,
Their hands and faces stiff with holiness.
The moon sees nothing of this. She is bald and wild.
And the message of the yew tree is blackness –
blackness and silence. **Submitted by Peston Cenorr**

WHEN THE SUN GOES DOWN

Bev and I often travel over to Tockholes to take our dogs for a walk. Tockholes is a very underrated village right on our doorstep with incredible views to the west over the Fylde coast.

As we recently drove over to Tockholes, the sun was a vivid red ball low in the sky. These vibrant colours seen at both sunset and sunrise are caused by the low angle of the sun and its rays travelling through more layers of our atmosphere. This has the effect of bending the light (refraction) and the sun can still be seen even though it has already dipped below the horizon - an optical illusion. It is the refracted image of the sun we see not the sun itself.

There is another spectacle at sunset which I have witnessed both on film and first-hand. If the sun is setting over the sea the last rays are passing through the top layers of water, and you see a blue - green flash. Perhaps I am being over sentimental, but I always feel a tinge of sadness as the sun disappears from sight and another day ends.

Tony C

LATE LAMENT

Late Lament is a poem written by the Moody Blues' drummer, Graeme Edge, and is often featured at the end of the song "Nights in White Satin", written by Justin Hayward. It is usually read aloud by keyboardist Mike Pinder, accompanied by orchestral instrumentals in the background.

Breathe deep the gathering gloom,
Watch lights fade from every room.
Bedsitter people look back and lament,
Another day's useless energy spent.
Impassioned lovers wrestle as one,
Lonely man cries out for love and has none,
New mother picks up and suckles her son,
Senior citizens wish they were young.
Cold hearted orb which rules the night,
Removes the colours from our sight.
Red is grey and yellow white,
But we decide which is right,
And which is an illusion?

Submitted by Tony C

OGHAM TREES -THE BRAMBLE

In the Celtic Ogham history, traditions of the more northerly European countries have the bramble as the sacred wood for the 10th lunar month -September 2nd to September 29th. Its powers of healing, protection, abundance and wealth.

The Bramble is a common native species. It is found in many different types of plant communities from woodlands to heaths and dunes though it is not found in native pine woodland and is generally more common in lowland than upland woods. Folk names for the blackberry are - bramble vine include bumblekites, bounty thorn, skaldberry, blackbutters, blackbides and gatterberry. In Gaelic it is the prickle thorn - dris-muine

Blackberry vines, with their long, thorny canes are a common sight arching among the English lanes and hedgerows, scrambling over fences, spreading quickly to make huge impenetrable barriers if left untended. They grow well in almost any soil, particularly a sandy one, in sun or shade, but like most plants, they will flower (delicate pink and white flowers from June through to September) and crop (August and September) better if they find some sunshine.

Blackberries are placed nowadays among the antioxidant 'superfoods'. They are a very rich source of Vitamin C, A, Omega-3, Potassium and Calcium. All parts of the plant have been used down the centuries for healing - the Native Americans used a concoction of the roots and leaves to help with stomach and digestion problems. We now know that the plants are astringent because they are high in tannins and are a natural source of salicylate which is in modern day aspirin and relieves tissue inflammation. Chewing the leaves for bleeding, diseased gums and gradually loosening teeth is a remedy that goes back hundreds of years.

The legend most closely associated with blackberry vines is one warning us not to pick and eat the fruit after Michaelmas Day - September 29th, or the old Michaelmas Day, which was October 10th.



Some interesting facts about the Bramble

- A bramble vine that has grown into a natural arch was used to aid healing, especially recommended for rheumatism or whooping-cough. A baby would be passed through the arch backwards and then three times forwards - an older child or adult would crawl, preferably in an east - west direction whilst helpers asked the deities for their help.
- Weather watch: a very cold spell whilst the blackberries are in full flower (late June to July) is known as a Blackberry Winter. It foretells plenty of snow and ice later in the year.
- The best bramble berries are the first to ripen at the end of the spears.
- Brambles are apomictic – they can produce seeds without being fertilised.
- Bees love bramble flowers.
- 240 species of insects feed on bramble, 32 of them exclusively on bramble.
- Song thrushes and wrens like to nest in bramble thickets.
- Bramble is good in hedges.

A recipe for Fresh Blackberry Leaf Tea: (for 1 mug)

1 handful fresh green blackberry leaves. 1½ mugs water. Honey. (Optional) small pieces of stem, bark or clean root and a few ripe berries for colour.

Simmer the green leaves (and bark if used) in the water for about 10 minutes. (do not boil as this may reduce the vitamin content). Strain into cups and add honey. Use this hot after a SVRC walk, as a refreshing vitamin and antioxidant filled tea.

Jean G

THE ROADSIDE HEDGE

When you are speeding along country lanes in the car you could be forgiven for thinking that the hedges, ditches and unattended verges running alongside them are rather featureless. But while we are out with Spring Vale Ramblers, sometimes we are required to travel along these roads, at a more leisurely pace and then we can take a closer look. You soon discover that they form a fascinating network of linear wildlife corridors winding through our countryside. At various times of year, they are packed with fruit, seeds, nectar or insects that in turn attract huge numbers of wildlife that feed on this abundance of food. The roadside hedge is a familiar sight within Bowland and the Ribble Valley, for within our own locality of the West Pennine Moors, road and field boundaries are more commonly dry-stone walls which provide a completely different variety of flora and fauna.

Hedges on the edge of fields are usually composed of prickly hawthorn or blackthorn, but since the birds' deposit other seeds you'll also find bramble, elder, wild hops, dog rose and the walkers joy, a honeysuckle. Hedgerow berries are appreciated by all sorts of wildlife - birds, small rodents even foxes - while the nectar of elder and bramble attract an enormous range of butterflies.

It is very common to see the occasional trees to be left to go up through the hedge, so find the odd oak, or perhaps an apple tree that has grown up from pips shed by an apple core thrown from a car window by a passing motorist. These are attractive to nesting birds, such as pigeon or crows, and if there is a good group of tall trees you may spot a noisy rookery.



You may also see elm trees which today are often dead, but still house a range of beetles which in turn provide food for other wild creatures or hazel bushes which have grown from nuts buried by squirrels. Hedges outside old country cottages are particularly productive for wildlife, since they were often originally planted with country fruit trees such as damson, cherry or elder, whose produce can be used for making wines and preserves but is often left for the birds.

Overgrown hedges are often full of ivy which if left to grow, eventually reaches its mature phase and instead of climbing and having the usual three-pointed ivy leaves becomes bushy and woodier, producing large, rounded leaves and clusters of greenish flowers in autumn. These attract lots of small insects which in turn are eaten by wrens and flowers are followed by bunches of berries that ripen to black after Christmas and give the blackbirds a feed.

In areas where the hedge bottoms have been left to grow their traditional range of wildflowers and the narrow roadside verges in front of them remained uncut, conditions are even better for wildlife. Long grasses feed the caterpillars of many butterfly species such as meadow browns which are now being seen again in significant numbers. They also house a large variety of wildflowers starting with cuckoo pint, harebell, cow parsley and hogweed, which plays host to soldier beetles and the year ends with thistles and teasels. whose seed attracts flocks of goldfinch.



Cuckoo Pint

So, the next time you take a walk along a quiet country lane or walk alongside a well-established hedge field boundary take a few moments to stop and take a closer look at the delights you are passing along your journey, you will be astounded at the diversity you will find in such a small space.

Glenda B