

Ramblers Gems



A Spring Vale Rambling Class Publication

Volume 2 Issue 43

22nd October 2021

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A Halloween Walk

Halloween falls on the 31st of October and is the evening before All Hallows Day when people would light bonfires and wear costumes to ward off ghosts and evil spirits. The villages around Pendle Hill have grown up with the tradition of recognising the witch trials dating from 1612. There is now a local tradition of walking up to the top of Pendle on Halloween. The association with the renowned Lancashire Witches and Halloween has evolved over time, progressing into activities like trick-or-treating, carving jack-o-lanterns from pumpkins, festive gatherings, donning costumes and eating treats, all of which bear little association to the events of the area around Pendle.

I would recommend that you undertake this walk during the day and not in the dead of night. All the paths to the top have been improved but still can prove to be tricky to walk. Autumn is a wonderful time for enjoying our local countryside. The air is crisp and clear, and trees are decorated in rich autumnal colours.
Michael C

The Ministry of Silly Walks

“The Ministry of Silly Walks” is a sketch from Monty Python's Flying Circus episode 14. The episode was recorded on the 9th of July 1970 and aired on TV on 15th of September 1970. The sketch was also shortened and performed during Monty Python's Live at the Hollywood Bowl.

The sketch involves John Cleese as Mr Teabag, the Minister for Silly Walks, walking through the streets of London in a very peculiar manner. He eventually arrives at his place of work: The Ministry of Silly Walks, on the northern end of Whitehall. In the hallway, he passes other employees all exhibiting their own silly walks before arriving at his office. Once there, he finds Mr Putey (Michael Palin) waiting for him and apologises for the delay, explaining that his walk has become particularly silly of late and it takes longer for him to reach his destination. Putey explains that he has a silly walk he wishes to develop with grant money. He demonstrates his walk which, to Teabag, isn't particularly silly and declines his application as funds are short.

However, has this memorable sketch cast a long shadow: one of the reasons maybe that the government as constantly shied clear of applying a sensible strategy to promote more walking and improve conditions for pedestrians.

It is undoubtedly the fear of being ridiculed by the media for setting up a Ministry of Silly Walks that prevents them from implementing a national scheme, when all indications point to the greater benefits of walking.

Eleanor

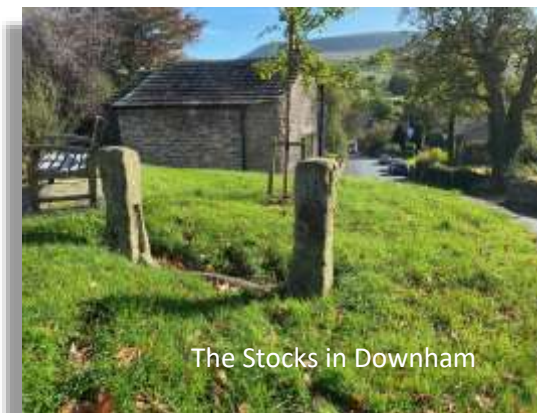
Downham - a village of note

The village of Downham nestles at the base of Pendle Hill and is a starting point for many of Spring Vale Ramblers walk. Our next walk, the first of the Winter Programme of walks on the 6th of November starts from the village at 11.00am.

The Downham area was first settled over 1000 years ago, probably during the 8th or 9th century, but the village is not mentioned in Domesday. Two ancient roads used by early travellers pass close to the village. The route of the Roman road from Ribchester to Ilkley passes along Downham Green to the north of the village. A much older route, probably part of the Irish Gold Road, passes to the south end of the village.

St Leonards parish church stands at the top of the steep main street forming a perfect and harmonious grouping with Downham Hall. The records for how old the church at Downham is remain unknown but in 1910 when substantial rebuilding took place traces of what were believed to be early Norman or Anglo-Saxon foundations were unearthed. The tower was originally built in the fifteenth century

Downham Hall has been the seat of the Assheton family since the 16th century. The Hall is an H-shaped house, which at first sight seems early 19th century, although research has shown that elements of a 17th century structure still survive, while a stone tower recorded in 1779 may point to medieval origins. The Assheton family are responsible for keeping the village and the surrounding estate, in a well-maintained condition. This includes the farms and some of the houses in the neighbouring village of Twiston, in its present unblemished condition. None of the properties on the estate are privately owned.



The Stocks in Downham

This long-established history makes Downham one of the principle villages of the Pendle area and a manor court has been held here since the 14th century. The village supported a much larger community some 200 years ago, with agriculture and handloom weaving being the main source of employment. In 1816 a Wesleyan chapel (now the village hall) was built on the ridge at the end of the village opposite the church. Most of the present stone cottages were built on older sites between the reigns of the 'great' queens Elizabeth I and Victoria. The oldest house is dated 1580.



Worsaw Hill

The absence of TV aerials has made Downham an ideal location for historical dramas and many films have been shot in the village and its surroundings. In 2001-3 the 1950s production 'Born and Bred' was filmed in Downham. At an earlier date a shot from 'Wuthering Heights' was taken on church brow and other films have been made here. One of the most famous films (although this one did have TV aerials in view!) was the 1961 'Whistle Down the Wind' starring Hayley Mills and Alan Bates. The film was largely shot at Worsaw End Farm and included local children from Downham and Chatburn schools in the roles of many of the children in the film.



Worsaw End Farm

Michael C

Ailsa Craig

(*Aillse Creag* meaning "Fairy Rock" in Gaelic)

Everyone knows it's there...Everyone knows its name. You can see Ailsa Craig from Arran on a clear day. It seems that the best day trips are from Girvan situated on the east coast of the Firth of Clyde.

Staying at one of the quieter villages on Arran I could enjoy the stunning sandy beach in the tranquil village of Blackwaterfoot. Taking the coastal road south from Blackwaterfoot you will pass the Lagg Hotel (Velo Café), Kildonan Hotel (Arran Ales) and along the south coast you will have great views of Ailsa Craig.



Ailsa Craig is likened by many to a giant currant bun

I love remote islands and coastal walks, and this is what initially attracted me. The island stands at over 1,100 ft at its highest point and takes up around 240 acres of the sea. It has been uninhabited since 1990. However, the ascent to its highest point is extremely steep and rough: it gives a real hillwalking challenge but an unforgettable one. There is a path only on lower parts, often obscured by deep bracken in summer and slippery with bluebells in spring. On reflection I think a boat trip and viewing the bird colonies from the sea, on a calm day, might be the better option!

The island currently belongs to David Thomas Kennedy, the 9th Marquess of Ailsa. He owns the entire island, apart from two hectares which were sold to the Northern Lighthouse Board in 1883. In 2011, it was announced that the island would be put up for sale, with the asking price being around the £1,500,000 mark. Unsold! Planning was lodged to build a five-star hotel on the island. However, planning regulations prevented this from happening due to too much work needing to be done.

The only buildings on the island are the lighthouse on its east coast, facing the Scottish mainland, a ruined

tower-house and the old quarry manager's house that is used by the RSPB and who have leased the island as a bird sanctuary until 2050. The lighthouse on the island was built between 1883 and 1886 by Thomas Stevenson, who was a pioneering Scottish civil engineer.

Ailsa Craig has large and varied quantities of fine Granite that was mined for making curling stones from the early 1800s, until 1971. Many of the top curling stones that are used today are made from this granite.

A castle was built by the Hamilton Family to protect the island from King Philip II of Spain. Ailsa Craig was a haven for Roman Catholics during the Scottish Reformation. Due to its secluded nature, the island was used as a prison during the 18th and 19th centuries.



Castle and lighthouse from above

The island had two railway systems which would transport supplies to the lighthouse and transport road stone from the quarries and one of these railway lines is still largely intact.

Ailsa Craig is sometimes referred to as "Paddy's Milestone", as it is approximately the halfway point of the sea journey from Belfast to Glasgow. The island is also known by other names such as The Rock, Alisdair's rock, Elizabeth of the ocean and Alasan.

Now, remember all these facts because the Kinloch Hotel public bar at Blackwaterfoot has a quiz on a Thursday night and the last Spring Vale Rambling Class visitors (Julie Cooper, Mavis Briggs, myself and two ladies from Oswaldtwistle) won the £50 prize money and a round of drinks on our visit!

Barbara S

To Ailsa Rock

by John Keats written c 1818

Hearken, thou craggy ocean pyramid!
Give answer from thy voice – the sea-fowl's screams!
When were thy shoulders mantled in huge streams?
When from the sun was thy broad forehead hid?
How long is't since the mighty Power bid
Thee heave to airy sleep from fathom dreams –
Sleep in the lap of thunder or sunbeams –
Or when gray clouds are thy cold coverlid?
Thou answerest not, for thou art dead asleep.
Thy life is but two dead eternities –
The last in air, the former in the deep!
First with the whales, last with the eagle skies!
Drown'd wast thou till an earthquake made thee steep,
Another cannot wake thy giant size!



Contribution by Pesto Cenorr

Stranger Things

There is a curious area sometimes visited by Spring Vale Rambling Class to the west of White Coppice in the Coppull area. One moment you are walking along a quiet country lane in the middle of nowhere, then suddenly you come across some high fencing with large warning signs to ward off trespassers. Some yards beyond the fence is an obvious artificial mound.

It is almost impossible to walk past the site without stopping and wondering, and on a visit to the area about two or three years ago Spring Vale Ramblers did just that. There were a few theories floating around - some based on rumours or urban myths or anecdotes. What seemed strange was that after a few minutes at the site this quiet spot suddenly became busy, when three ordinary looking cars appeared from nowhere and slow down as they passed us. Maybe they were just local residents being cautious to walkers, but it makes you think. One moment it was quiet and suddenly three vehicles appear. Were we being watched?

There have been stories about local residents seeing very bright lights in the area in the middle of the night. One story connected with the transformation from steam to electrification in the 60s is fascinating. Actually, diesel succeeded steam, but electrification was the ultimate aim). A good number of locomotives were destined for the iron scrap works but there were rumours that a number were unaccounted for.

The cold war was much in evidence during the 1960s and the story was that the authorities decided to keep a number of locomotives away from the scrap yards. If a nuclear war took place all electrical devices and things operated by electricity would be disabled by the subsonic waves given off by nuclear blasts. The only way of getting materials and supplies around the country would be by non-electrical power means such as steam engines.

Another rumour goes on to say that the whole area was used by the Royal Ordnance Factory (ROF) at Euxton as an explosive storage and distribution facility. The steel doors are actually entrances to tunnels which run from this site to the ROF in Euxton and they were used to transport munitions from factory to store. How much of these are true remains unknown. The truth is out there.

Tony C

Stanhill – The Birthplace of a Revolution

A walk that we have completed on several occasions starts from the small town of Oswaldtwistle and winds its way along twisting tracks and urban commons to follow the lane leading to the area known as Brook Side. It is from here that a short climb leads us to the village of Stanhill. Stanhill straddles the road from Knuzden Blackburn to Oswaldtwistle, but Stanhill Village is probably best known as the former home of James Hargreaves and the site of his revolutionary invention – the Spinning Jenny.

For many centuries, wool and flax (used to make linen) had been changed from fibres (the raw material) to thread, or yarn, using a spinning wheel. The wheel was turned by hand or, in some cases, by using a foot peddle. The motion of the wheel turned a spindle which pulled on the fibres. This caused the fibres to be drawn out and twisted to make yarn.

James Hargreaves (c1720 -1778) was a weaver who lived in Stanhill Village. He was poor, uneducated and had a large family. It is said that, in 1767, one of his daughters accidentally knocked over his spinning wheel. As Hargreaves watched the overturned machine, he noticed that the spindle continued to spin, even though it had now been turned over by the fall. It occurred to him that the same wheel might be used to turn many spindles at the same time. He set about making a machine with eight spindles connected to one wheel. He called his machine the Spinning Jenny. (Jenny was a general name used for machinery at the time – it was not the name of any of Hargreaves' daughters!)



James Hargreaves Birthplace in Stanhill

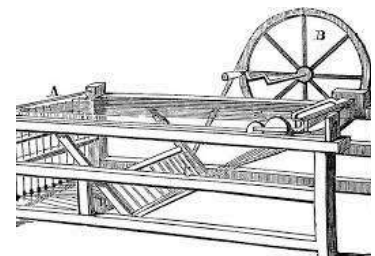
Hargreaves made a number of Spinning Jennies and started to sell them in the area. However, since each machine was capable of doing the work of eight people, other spinners were angry about the competition. In 1768, a group of spinners broke into Hargreaves' house and destroyed his machines. Hargreaves decided to move his family away from Stanhill and they settled in Nottingham. It was here where Hargreaves found a partner, Thomas James, and together they set up a small spinning mill.

Although he patented his invention in July 1770, Hargreaves had already given away its secrets during the years since its inception. The Spinning Jenny had already been duplicated and modified by others. Richard Arkwright worked on Hargreaves invention and increased the number of spinning spindles, it incorporated rollers to compress and stretch the yarns. This modification required much more power and the machine became operated by a water wheel. Hence this invention was named the Water Frame. Samuel Crompton from Bolton combined features of the moving carriage of the Spinning Jenny with Arkwright's frame rollers. This invention had the name of a spinning mule. This machine could not only produce hundreds of spindles of yarn at once, but also yarns of different types and qualities.

James Hargreaves never earned very much in the way of royalties and continued to work in his spinning mill until his death in 1778. Nevertheless, his estate at the time of his death was £4000, a decent sum at that time.

The popular view is that Hargreaves lived in the cottage which was until recent times the village post office and there is now a plaque commemorating his revolutionary invention. It is hard to appreciate that the birth of the Industrial Revolution, by the invention of the Spinning Jenny was conceived right here on our doorstep and most people casually walk past the property without giving it a second glance.

The Spinning Jenny



Glenda B