

# Ramblers Gems



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### The Gunpowder Plot

The story of how Guy Fawkes was hanged, drawn and quartered after attempting to kill the King James and blow-up Parliament in 1605 is well-known.

The famous conspirator is said to have smuggled 36 barrels of gunpowder into the cellar of the House of Lords before being caught red-handed - but many of the facts we were taught in school are actually common misconceptions, and the truth behind the nation's favourite villain is not as clear.

Here are some of the most common myths and lesser-known facts about Guy Fawkes and the Gunpowder Plot in preparation for the celebrations on 5 November.

Dummies have been burned on bonfires since as long ago as the 13th century, initially to drive away evil spirits. But, following the Gunpowder Plot, the focus of the sacrifices switched to Guy Fawkes' treason.

The traditional death for traitors in 17th-century England was to be hanged from the gallows, then drawn and quartered in public. As Fawkes awaited his grisly punishment on the gallows, he leapt to his death - to avoid the horrors of his punishment, his stomach opened and his guts spilled out before his eyes. He died from a broken neck. His body was subsequently quartered, and his remains were sent to "the four corners of the kingdom" as a warning to others.

There was a total of 13 conspirators in the plot, which was masterminded by Robert Catesby. Catesby was a charismatic Catholic figure who had a reputation for speaking out against the English crown. But it was Fawkes who gained notoriety after he was caught red-handed, as he had the perilous duty of sneaking into the cellar beneath the House of Lords and igniting the explosives.

Despite becoming the greatest enemy of the Protestant establishment, Guy Fawkes was, in fact, born into the faith. However, his maternal grandparents were recusant Catholics, who refused to attend Protestant services.

The 36 barrels of gunpowder that Fawkes planted in a cellar below the Houses of Parliament would have been sufficient to raze it to the ground, while causing severe damage to neighbouring buildings. However, some experts have claimed that the gunpowder had "decayed" and would not have properly exploded even if it had been ignited.

**Michael C**

## From Tramping the Moors to Treading the Boards

How often have you been asked this question? “Other than walking what do you do?” One walk leader (in another walking group) uses this question as an icebreaker before their walks. So, in a kinda “getting to know” fellow SVRC members we are asking the question? You can of course make up all sorts of far-fetched ideas if you like.

So apart from walking what do I do?

Well, I am also a member of a group called “The Galloping Grannies”. I bet you cannot guess what we do. This is a community group which was set up over 15 years ago to assist folk back onto horseback. You do not have to be a granny or grandad to join, nor do we gallop, but we do enjoy the occasional canter.

We meet once a week at Moorview Riding School for a lesson and then go to the pub – it is very civilised. The group has over 50 members, broken down into “rides”, currently I am in the Friday 11am group – the most social and lively one.



We have ‘themed’ rides at Christmas and Halloween.

I am the one on the right in the above photo without fancy dress.

I forgot my costume!!

**Jane C**

**Ed**

*Please tell us about the other activities you get involved in. Send to the [svrcramblers@gmail.com](mailto:svrcramblers@gmail.com) email address*

## The Pantomime Season

Many of you have already asked if there is a pantomime this year – Oh yes you have! Unfortunately, due to the pandemic and general uncertainty we have not put a panto on this year.



We are however putting on a “review” type event over 2 nights –

**Date for Diary**  
**19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>**  
**November**  
**at**  
**St Cuthbert’s**  
**School, Darwen.**

£5 will get you an evening of dancing, the junior and senior chorus, sketches (with me!), jokes, a potato pie supper, raffle and much more, all overseen by our very own Widow Twankie – that is a clue to next year’s Panto. **If interested let me know directly or via the Ramblers Gems email address or pay on the door.**

Having been told (at auditions!) that I have a face for radio and comedy, I am only available to play fairies, witches, parrots, and policemen.



So that is a bit about me.....

other than walking what do you do?

**Jane C**

## Nature in November

As the nights draw in, it's time to dig those thick coats out of the cupboard. November provides us with some amazing wildlife to discover – and there's plenty to see right on your doorstep and whilst out walking with SVRC. In November, when the weather is mild, the countryside will be draped in gossamer web from linyphiid spiders. Whooper and Bewick's swans are some of the most spectacular visitors and enliven even a misty November day.

Mosses of all kinds can be found in woods and hedgerows; their velvety evergreen tufts and cushions stand out among the bare wood. Many plants produce beautiful seed heads, such as hogweed and teasel, which are valuable as food for birds, but also as stems in which insects can overwinter.

Unlike the rabbit, brown hares do not burrow so you may spot them crouching in fields at this time of year.

Many birds gather together in small flocks, especially finches and tits. Out on the marshes, skeins of geese arrive to spend the winter in Britain. Sunflower seeds attract the widest range of birds to our gardens including blue and great tits plus all the finch species that regularly feed in gardens. Barnacle geese winter on the north-west coast and brent geese from Siberia find a refuge on our muddy estuaries.

Freshwater invertebrates like caddis are present all year. Now is a good time to look for the larvae in their cases made from stones or bits of plant material. Dragonflies spend most of their lives underwater. They may take five years to become an adult. Although they are on the wing in summer, you can find the nymphs in freshwater at any time of year.



Teasel



Brown Hare

Winter berries provide a splash of colour to brighten up your photos. At this time of year, traditional countryside hedges are full of blackberries, elderberries, rosehips, haws and sloes, forming a supply of food for birds through the winter.

You might think November is an odd time to listen out for birds, but tawny owls are territorial throughout the autumn, as young birds search for new territories. Did you know that the classic 'twit twoo' is a duet? The female goes 'twit' or more accurately 'keewheat' and males make a more classic 'ho ho ho hoooo' call.



Tawny Owl

Feed the ducks! You may know that bread isn't the best of foods for our feathered friends. Healthier suggestions include wheat and other grains, peas, chopped lettuce ...and even halved grapes.

Hedgehogs – It's very important to check your bonfires thoroughly before lighting them. Hedgehogs may be using them for hibernating or just a day-time refuge. Foxes are on the move so look out for some new faces in your neighbourhood. Males particularly start to roam far and wide in search of new territories ahead of breeding in a few months' time.

Hibernating ladybirds like wedging themselves in windowsills so take care when cleaning. Also, be careful not to disturb any hibernating butterflies that could be lurking in a quiet corner of the house.

Winter moths are pretty amazing. They can cope with freezing temperatures and are active on even the coldest days. The females don't actually have wings. Instead, they have the tiniest little winglets that render them incapable of flying.

Winter Moth  
Cannot Fly



National Tree Week is the UK's largest annual tree celebration, marking the start of the winter tree planting season (November to March each year). In 2021, it will take place from Saturday 27 November – Sunday 5 December. It's never been more important to plant trees for the future.

**Jean G**

## A Milestone Landmark

Milestones are almost obsolete today, except as a historical record. Modern transport does not require milestones, which are practically invisible to motorists. However, for several centuries' milestones were the only form of reference for walkers before maps had been standardised. They not only let walkers know where they were, but they were also used to time mail coaches and walking races and work out the cost of postage and of hiring horses.

The Romans first defined the centre of Imperial Rome with the "Golden Milestone" and placed milestones on their roads showing the distance to this datum so travellers could mark their progress. The Millarium Aureum was the first golden milestone and was erected by the Emperor Augustus in 20BC. This milestone marked the point from which the major imperial highways radiated.

In the more remote parts of Britain such as the Peak District and the Yorkshire Moors, travellers often perished as they became lost without landmark features to orient themselves. In an attempt to do something about this needless loss of life, William III decreed that guide stones be erected in such regions in 1697.



**A Milepost on a route over the North Yorkshire Moors**

Up to the middle years of the 18th century, many roads in Britain were little more than dusty tracks in summer, and quagmires in winter. At around that time, though, turnpike trusts began to operate many of the main, through-routes. The Trusts charged road-users for the privilege of usage, and in return, maintained the roads, replacing the previously haphazard system of parish maintenance.

Strategically placed toll gates were set-up as payment collection points, usually on the edges of towns and villages through which the roads passed, and as a service to passengers, milestones were placed by the roadside, some of which still remain in position. They could be elaborately carved out of stone or individually engineered out of cast iron.



**A Typical Cast Iron Milepost**

Milestone' is a generic term, including mileposts made of cast iron. Such waymarkers are fast disappearing; around 9000 are thought to survive in the UK. Most were removed or defaced in World War II to baffle potential German invaders and not all were replaced afterwards. Many have been demolished as roads have been widened, or have been victims of collision damage, or have been smashed by hedge-cutters or flails.



**A Protected Milepost**

Since the advent of the car, milestones have become less relevant but in recent years their importance as historical landmarks has been recognised and they are now being preserved and restored.

**Eleanor**

## November

by Thomas Hood

No sun - no moon!  
No morn - no noon -  
No dawn - no dusk - no proper time of day -  
No sky - no earthly view -  
No distance looking blue -  
No road - no street - no 't'other side the way' -  
No end to any Row -  
No indications where the Crescents go -  
No top to any steeple -  
No recognitions of familiar people -  
No courtesies for showing 'em -  
No knowing 'em -  
No travelling at all - no locomotion,  
No inkling of the way - no notion -  
'No go' - by land or ocean -  
No mail - no post -  
No news from any foreign coast -  
No Park - no Ring - no afternoon gentility -  
No company - no nobility -  
No warmth, no cheerfulness, no healthful ease,  
No comfortable feel in any member -  
No shade, no shine, no butterflies, no bees,  
No fruits, no flowers, no leaves, no birds, -  
November!

*The poet Thomas Hood was born, died and buried in London. At the time Hood wrote 'November' London suffered from periodic smogs caused by air pollution that blackened the buildings, caused many premature deaths and rendered visibility to that of a 'pea soup' for a week at a time.*

*In 1843, the year before Hood published the poem, a Parliamentary Select Committee set in motion the long journey that would culminate in the Clean Air Act of 1956. This ended London's smogs by enforcing smokeless zones.*



Submitted by Pesto Cenorr

## Pea-Soupers



This photograph shows Blackburn Boulevard in 1965 when the fog closed in totally obscuring the view of the cathedral.

November is the month that is usually associated with thick fogs that roll in from the Atlantic or the North Sea. They are produced as the cold air travelling down from the Arctic and meets up with the warmer air coming from the continent. Coastal fog is a regular occurrence along our eastern coastline. In eastern Scotland, it is known locally as a Haar whilst in eastern England, the coastal fog is referred to as Fret.

Back in the day when most homes relied on coal fires and industry too derived much of its power from coal, the fog mixed with the smoke pollution and smog "pea-soupers" became a regular occurrence.

Indeed, while out walking in these conditions you could only see a few yards in front of your face, the smog was so thick.

The most lethal incidence of this smog in London occurred in 1952 when 4,000 deaths were reported in the city over a couple of days, and a subsequent 8,000 related deaths. This resulted in the Clean Air Act 1956 and Clean Air Act 1968, both now repealed and consolidated into the Clean Air Act 1993 which were effective in largely removing sulphur dioxide and coal smoke, the causes of pea soup fog.

These have now been replaced by less visible pollutants that are derived from vehicles in urban areas, but cause equally devastating effects on public health.

Barbara S