

Ramblers Gems



A Spring Vale Rambling Class Publication

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

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Current Restrictions

Despite the current surge in the new Omicron variant, we all need to apply some serious common sense. We need to take up the offer to get vaccinated and receive your booster. We need to wear masks everywhere in enclosed public spaces when moving around but could remove them when sat reasonably socially distanced.

The Government has not restricted in any way walking in groups and the rules about hand washing, using sanitiser and avoiding contact still apply. If you show signs of symptoms, then do not attend the walk, get tested and support self-isolation thus reducing the risks of community transmission.

We do not need to cancel Christmas, but we do need to manage the risks at any events. Stay safe.

Michael C

A Sugary Legend

Legend has it that a Kendal confectioner, Joseph Wiper, stumbled across mint cake while trying to make glacier mints. After taking his eye off the pan for a minute he noticed that the mixture had started to become cloudy, instead of clear, the foundation of mint cake was born.

Wiper began producing mint cake at his Ferney Green factory in Kendal in 1869. Initially the blocks of cake were just sold to locals, but the product became so successful that it began to spread across the North-East.

Wiper retired to British Columbia but his great nephew, Robert carried on with the business. Realising the energy potential of the cake, he supplied Ernest Shackleton's 1914-1916 Antarctic Expedition and Mallory's first Everest Expedition. The legend was born.

There are now four different mint cake producers in Kendal. Wiper's, Quiggin's, Wilson's and finally Romney who established themselves in 1918. Romney's bought out the Wiper's company in 1987 but continue to make it with their original recipe.



Glenda B

December Nature

As the year draws to a close, wild birds could do with your help - and there's still lots to see in the winter landscape. Make a bird table or put up a feeder to help birds survive the winter and don't forget they need water and break the ice in the morning so they can get a drink. Robins are abundant both in our gardens and on our Christmas cards! A colourful visitor is the jay so put out some monkey nuts but in their shells.

Most leaves have fallen by now, but ferns stand out on the woodland floor, especially the glossy evergreen fronds of hart's-tongue fern and hard shield fern. Holly and Ivy are brought into homes over the Christmas period as symbols of the spring that is to come and to ward away evil spirits.

An obvious fungus on dead wood is the candle-snuff fungus which looks like a blackened candlewick.



Candle-Snuff Fungus

Dark December days mean that many creatures such as grey squirrels are gathering what food they can in a short time and may visit your garden. Animals have to be a lot less particular about what they eat as they forage in the cold.

Rooks and crows roost together in huge flocks in woodland, and if you're lucky, you might see a barn owl ghosting over a frosty field late one afternoon. Grey herons are one of our earliest nesting species and will lay their eggs next month, meaning their huge nests will need a lot of attention in the meantime. Look out for herons hunting for sticks as well as fish.

There are still a few late flowers: chickweed, red dead nettle and winter heliotrope.

Yellow clumps of mistletoe dotted with white berries are food for mistle thrushes, fieldfares and wintering blackcaps



Fieldfare



Jay

Down by the coast you can see grey seals with their pups and many wading birds. Visit an estuary. Many birds visit Britain in the winter to escape from the cold further north. When the day is short winter waders have little time to feed so they probe the sand and mud for food when the tide is out. When the tide comes in birds huddle together in large groups and it's a spectacular sight. Wrap up warm and wear dark clothing so the birds don't become alarmed. Take binoculars as you are unlikely to get close!

Wigan Flashes - The Flashes (lakes) are a legacy of Wigan's industrial past and were formed as a result of mining subsidence. Over 200 species of bird have been recorded here. Visit for overwintering grey heron, tufted duck, coot, pochard, goldeneye, gadwall and great crested grebe.



Gadwell



Pochard

Mere Sands Wood is also a good place to visit at this time of year. The Mere Sands Nature Reserve is situated on Holmeswood Road, Ormskirk, Lancashire, L40 1TG. You might spot some fieldfare here. The Fieldfare is a large, colourful thrush that visits the UK in the winter to feast on berry-laden bushes in hedgerows, woodlands and parks.

Jean G

The Brook

by Lord Tennyson

I come from haunts of coot and hern,
I make a sudden sally,
And sparkle out among the fern,
To bicker down a valley.

By thirty hills I hurry down,
Or slip between the ridges,
By twenty thorps, a little town,
And half a hundred bridges.

Till last by Philip's farm I flow,
To join the brimming river,
For men may come and men may go,
But I go on forever.

I chatter over stony ways,
In little sharps and trebles,
I bubble into eddying bays,
I babble on the pebbles.

With many a curve my banks I fret,
By many a field and fallow,
And many a fairy foreland set,
With willow-weed and mallow.

I chatter, chatter, as I flow,
To join the brimming river,
For men may come and men may go,
But I go on forever.

I wind about, and in and out,
With here a blossom sailing,
And here and there a lusty trout,
And here and there a grayling.

And here and there a foamy flake,
Upon me, as I travel,
With many a silvery waterbreak,
Above the golden gravel.

And out again I curve and flow,
To join the brimming river,
For men may come and men may go,
But I go on forever.



Pesto Cenorr

Pendle Sculpture Trail

The fascinating true story of the Pendle Witches is now being told in "stone" at this visitor attraction in the Barley/Pendle area. The Pendle Sculpture Trail has ten ceramic plaques. Each plaque has its own unique symbols which represent each of the Pendle people who were hanged 400 years ago in the biggest witchcraft trial in this country. The fun part of this trail is finding the plaques as they are presented in a treasure trail style quiz to be hunted down and found!

There are also a number of mythical creatures dotted throughout the wood. Each one will give you a clue and when you have worked out all the clues you can spell out a name.



There is display on work from Lead Artist, Philippe Handford, including a "walking wall", an eerie tree that will grab you by the roots, and "tumbling" tree arches. As well as a life size Witchfinder General figure and creatures such as bats and a spider.



The trail is situated in a lovely woodland setting in Aitken Wood, just outside of Barley. Park in the Barley village Car Park after which it is about 1 mile to walk to the start of the trail. Don't drive down the private road.

Eleanor

History around Chipping

While walking around the Chipping area I went past a field called a 'laund' or lawn, because traditionally it grew lush green grass for fallow deer to graze on. During the 14th and 15th centuries this whole area was part of the Leagram Deer Park, and it was owned by the monarch. It was what we would now call a deer farm with an extensive 7 mile long boundary, or pale, to keep the deer in and the poachers out. There was a gate in the pale where cattle where cattle were also kept within the park. The beasts would be herded out onto the moors around Wolf and Saddle Fells, during the summer months when the deer had their young. There is still a farm in this area called Park Gate today.



View across the deer park to Longridge Fell

The route continued around on a well surfaced lane allowing access to several of the local farms, Chipping Lawn, Birchen Lee and Peacock Hey Farm to eventually arrive on the road back into Chipping. The way back was now along this road, but halfway down the hill on the right, was a large dam in front of Saunder House which held water, drawn from Chipping Brook, to drive the waterwheel that powered all the machinery in Tweedy's Foundry. It was once one of the largest water wheels in England. Before the Second World War this foundry made port holes and cast iron wheels for ships etc.



St Mary's Church Chipping

After the war they made mechanical potato peelers to peel various amounts of potatoes, right up to the giant fifty six pounder. They also manufactured chippers, pie machines, agricultural mixers and castings. All the ironwork for these products were made within this foundry. Chipping Brook used to run through the yard but was later tunnelled. More recently, the whole place was pulled down and new houses have now been built on the site.

Continuing further down the road, Berry's dam is passed with its many ducks that rushed to be fed as I walked past. The dam provided water to drive the works' waterwheel. Known as Kirk Mill the site was originally a corn mill, turned cotton mill and the records indicate that cotton spinning began around the mid 1500s using water power. The site was later redeveloped and the current mill building is reported to be one of the oldest Richard Arkwright designed cotton mills in the country, dating back to 1785. It is stated that from 1923 the water wheel was being used to generate electricity to light the mill and adjacent properties.



Mill Pond for Kirk Mill Chipping

The mill was taken over by the furniture maker HJ Berry in 1840, and they continued to use water power up until 1940 when a diesel engine was installed. An extension to the factory Kirk Mill was built on the other side of the road. The chair works was renowned for making rush bottom chairs and their production continued even throughout the dark days of the depressions. but in 2010 Berry's closed after calling in administrators. Workers at both Tweedy's and Berry's would come to work in the mornings in two double-decker buses from Longridge and Preston. Most of the local people worked at these two places too.

Michael C

I Love Christmas

As we start to prepare for that very special time of year, I decided to try to identify what makes my Xmas very special for me. I suggest that you have a go at creating your own list and then you can see that identifying your family Christmas list can start to shape memories and traditions for you and your family.

1. **Putting the tree and decorations up.** I always put the Christmas tree up in early December and this year will be no different. After starting some of my favourite Christmas music, I will decorate the tree – which can be quite challenging with any cats around. After years of collecting all manner of baubles, stars and tinsel, the tree when completed is now looking rather full. The original lights are no longer working but these have now been replaced by modern LEDs types, but the tree still looks beautiful and there's nothing to compare to having your Christmas tree up to make your home feel extra cozy and festive!

2. **Attending Midnight Mass.** For many years I have enjoyed the service of vigil mass at my local church which is preceded by the singing of traditional carols. I love the feeling I get when I leave the church and go out into the cool night air but being all wrapped up warm and cosy it doesn't matter. There is nothing better than to carry on the tradition of arriving home at 1:30 am to be greeted with a glass of warm mulled wine and a mince pie.

3. **Eating delicious food** One of the reasons why I love this time of the year is the crazy amount of delicious food you get to eat: guilt-free. There is nothing better than to find new Christmas recipes and test them out on your family and friends. Delia Smith's Christmas is always the faithful book that I fall back on if all else fails.



4. **Visiting Christmas markets.** I am looking forward to visiting a few Christmas markets at this time of year. It's so nice to wander around, buy some unique gifts, and stop for a hot chocolate! The stalls are always transformed with colourful trimmings and festooned with lighting to give that festival feel. There is usually a stall selling wreaths, holly and mistletoe to add to your traditional decorations.



5. **Wrapping up presents** Some people find this task tedious but I love wrapping presents. I don't know why but I actually find it quite relaxing, so I really enjoy picking up wrapping paper, ribbons, and festive coloured tape to decorate my gifts. Anyone else enjoys wrapping gifts?

6. **Listening to Christmas music.** I love Christmas music and carols and it has been known for me to play them anytime throughout the year. Is that just me? Some of my favourites include Have Yourself A Merry Little Christmas by Frank Sinatra, Nat King Cole singing Silent Night and Michael Bubl  Christmas album which I recently discovered.

7. **Watching Christmas movies.** What's better than curling up on the couch watching a Christmas movie while it's cold and rainy outside? The movies guaranteed to get you in a festive mood are the classics, which on my list include White Christmas, Home Alone, Elf, Polar Express and the most recent discovery which I will add to my favourite list, A Boy called Christmas.

Glenda B