

Ramblers Gems



A Spring Vale Rambling Class Publication

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Latest Restrictions

The UK government published a four-step roadmap to ease lockdown restrictions in England this week.

We will study this to see what it means for walking and hopefully we will be able to restart in a limited way soon. In the meantime, England remains in **national lockdown**.

Our walking activities are still suspended.

- You must avoid all non-essential travel and stay local. You must not travel to Scotland or Wales.
- Walking with family & friends: once a day as part of your daily exercise – by yourself, with members of your household or support bubble, or with one other person.

Glimpses of Wildlife

It used to be quite common to see Roe Deer on Spring Vale Rambling Class walks for they were regularly disturbed as we come over the brow of a hill or spotted hiding nervously in woodland. Now their numbers are luckily on the increase.

I often see them whilst walking my dogs near to where I live in the Birch Hall area of Darwen particularly on the disused football field and surrounding land only a few yards from my back garden. Although the roe deer are native to Britain, they became extinct in England during the 18th century when they were over hunted, (the same old story). They were reintroduced from Scotland where they were still able to roam.

They are not the most sociable of deer and are quite a timid animal for they are often seen singly or in small groups. They are most active in the morning and around twilight when they can be seen browsing, but always keeping a watchful eye peeled for danger.

The does give birth to usually two kids from April to June. Roe deer feed on grass, herbs, shoots, twigs and leaves during the summer months. They revert to nuts and fruit in the autumn and browse on holly and ivy in the depths of winter. They have whitish rumps in winter, which is very noticeable as they bound away, with any fence that is in their way easily leapt over even quite tall ones. Their coat at this time of year is a greyish brown colour but changes to a distinctive red in the summer months.

I'm quite sure that we will spot more of them when we able start up rambling again.

Tony C

Welcome Snowdrops

By Iris Hesselden

The sky is heavy, leaden grey,
The sun has disappeared!
But see beside the garden gate
The snowdrops have appeared!
The wind blows chill and drives the rain
The trees are stark and bare,
And yet they raise their tiny heads
To brave the wintry air.
Yet we are huddled in our coats
In hats and gloves and boots,
But they know perseverance
It's nurtured in their roots.
So thank you snowdrops, small and white
Your welcome as before,
You tell us winter will be gone
And spring returns once more!

Submitted by Anne S

The Heron, the Cat and the Bramble

By Lewis T Evans

Once there was a heron and a cat and a bramble. The three were farming. And they gave up farming and shared the money between the three of them.

And what did the heron do but put the money in a purse round its neck and saw its reflection in the river as he flew above it. And the string broke and it lost the purse. And ever since then the heron has been looking for the purse along the river.

And the cat bought wheat with its money, and the mice ate it all. And that's why the cat has been ferociously hostile towards mice ever since.

And the bramble lent its money to some stranger but didn't know who he was. And that's where it is - taking hold of every man who passes it, thinking that that's the man it gave its money to.

Submitted by Jean G

There to Help - Mountain Rescue

There are 49 volunteer mountain rescue teams in England and Wales, across nine geographical regions. The team members are on call 24 hours a day 365 days a year to recover climbers from precipitous crags, reunite lost walkers with their loved ones and rescue injured and sick casualties safely.

Within the Spring Vale Rambling Class usual area of walking there are two active Mountain Rescue Teams that are part of this national search and rescue service.

Rossendale and Pendle Mountain Rescue Team

covers an area of approx. 350 square miles across East Lancashire, Pendle, the Rossendale Valley and parts of Greater Manchester. The team is made up entirely of volunteers. The chances are you won't ever need their services but, since January 2000, over five hundred people have. Injured walkers, fell runners, climbers, paragliders, mountain bikers (even the odd stranded sheep or crag fast dog!) were more than pleased to see the team approach.

Bolton MRT - volunteer search and rescue service have been saving lives in wild and remote places since 1968. Alan Southworth, one of our members, was one of the founding members of the team and would regularly be out on training weekends. Think "Mountain Rescue", and you don't immediately think of "Bolton". Nevertheless they have been providing a volunteer search and rescue service, covering an area of over 800 square kilometres. The area covered is from Darwen in the north to Manchester Airport in the south, Wigan to the west and the centre of Manchester to the east. This may sound like a mainly urban area that you wouldn't associate with "Mountain Rescue" however this patch contains quite a lot of moors and open land which is full of walkers, climbers, mountain bikers and horse riders.

Their knowledge of the local terrain and conditions, combined with specialist equipment, vehicles, training and casualty care ensure that rescues are carried out in a professional manner. The service that these teams provide is free to the people that need it, but without the support and generosity of the public they simply couldn't function.

Michael C

Cockle Picking Dangers

It is 355 miles by car from Morecambe Bay to Barra in the Outer Hebrides and the journey takes over ten hours, including a spectacular five-hour ferry crossing from Oban to Castle Bay with Kisimul Castle located on a small island at the entrance.

What do these two places have in common I hear you ask – cockles and danger!

Cockles are small shellfish with a salty flavour that are popular all over the world. Their small, heart-shaped shells contain a small, delicate morsel of flesh that can be eaten raw, steamed or boiled. Cockling is done by hand at both places, far gentler than dredging. The result is fewer cracked shells and a premium price, but the trade is not without danger at both locations.

Since at least the 1700s the Kent and Keer rivers of Morecambe Bay have swallowed many a person and horse or pedestrians as they crossed the dangerous sands of Morecambe Bay. 'Swallowed' is a literal warning, as quicksands left by the ebbing tides can suck a paddler down to a dirty death. The only safe way to walk here is on an official guided walk!

The Morecambe Bay cockling disaster occurred seventeen years ago on the evening of 5 February 2004 at Morecambe Bay, when at least 21 Chinese undocumented immigrant labourers were drowned by an incoming tide after picking cockles.

During a walk along the Lancashire Coastal Way from Hest Bank to Carnforth you pass the trig point which is a good place to stop and enjoy the views before heading towards Red Bank Farm. On your left just before the farm is a carved white stone of a praying figure emerging from a shell. It is a remarkable piece of sculpture but is now surrounded by an ugly grey fence. The inscription reads 'Praying Shell, 1994 – 2013, Anthony Padgett'. This kneeling figure is now, widely regarded as a memorial to the 21 Chinese cockle-pickers.



The cockle pickers at Barra risk tides and an additional danger. Port-adhair Bharraigh is a Hebridean transport hub and the only one in the world where scheduled flights use a tidal beach for a runway. The beach is a two-mile long stretch of white sand and is regularly voted the top airport approach on the planet. When you see the windsock flying beware of danger. It is there to let cockle pickers know the beach is the airport runway and a plane is expected on the landing strip. That is until the tide comes. In the morning I walked with a party along a section of the Vatersay Coastal Path. At the airport we had lunch watching the plane arrive and depart and, in the afternoon, we did an historic rural/coastal walk around Eoligarry.



Morecambe Bay is also famous for its potted shrimps which are a very local affair. The shrimps were initially caught in traditional 25ft boats, cleaned and boiled at sea in sea water and the potting done by the fishermen's wives. As this source of shrimps dried up, others were found by dredging along the local sands.

Barra is also famous for herring fishing. Castlebay was a herring port of some significance back in the nineteenth century, with up to 400 boats in the harbour and curing and packing factories ashore. At its peak up to 2,000 people were involved in the herring *industry* and during the season there was an influx of hundreds of "gutting girls." Along the shore there is a Herring Trail with boards depicting the history of the herring fishing industry.



Barbara S

Edwin Waugh - The Lancashire Burns

Edwin Waugh was a giant of literature and a master of his trade. Indeed, in an age when Charles Dickens was making his mark, his moniker was 'The Lancashire Burns' – a compliment no other Rochdale-born writer, before or since, has come remotely close to emulating.

Edwin Waugh (pronounced woff to rhyme with cough) is one of four Lancashire dialect poets commemorated by a memorial in Broadfield Park, near Rochdale Town Hall. Oliver Ormerod, Margaret Lahee and John Clegg are the others. They all lived in the 1800s. Harvey Kershaw joined them in being remembered on his death in 1986.



The Lancashire Poets Memorial Broadfield Park Rochdale

'The Diary of Edwin Waugh' by Brian Hollingworth details the life of this writer of both prose and poem. He writes of the moorlands, the breezes of which blow healthy spirits through the characters that people his pages.

An example of his prose writing is this description of what appears to be a night hike, or possibly returning home from the pub.

'In the black profound, we heard the rushing stream lashing its rocky course, but nothing was visible. The scene was gloomily grand. I would not exchange the robe of stormy darkness which Rossendale wore that night, for all that sunlight can do to make it bright. The wild changes of weird light which stole from the Moon through those flying clouds made the view more savage still. We laboured along the splashy path, through everything that makes a man or woman damp, but the wild sublimity of the scene repaid for all'

Many of his poems in dialect were related to family and friends, but also descriptions of the love he had for nature.

'Come whoam to thi' childer an' me' is one of his best known, others had an element of philosophy in them:

'My Uncle Sam's a fiddler; an'
'A lift on the Way'
'Owd Cronies, or wassail in a Country Inn'
'Th' Sweetheart Gate'
'Eawr Folk'



Edwin Waugh 1817-1890

The following reveals the nature lover-

'I've worn my bits of shoon away'

It's what care I for cities grand
We never shall agree.
I'd rayther live where the 'layrock sings
A country town for me!
A country town, where one can meet
Wi' friends an' neighbours known,
Where one can lounge I' the market place
An' see the meadows mown.

Yon' moorlan' hills are bloomin' wild
At the endin' o' July
Yon woodlan' cloofs an' valleys green
The sweetest under th' sky:
Yon dainty rindles, dancin' deawn
Fro' th' meawtains into th' plain;
As soon as th' new Moon rises, lads
I'm off to th' moors again!

Waugh wrote lots of books of poetry and prose as well as descriptions of his travels, these are just a taste which you may decide to investigate further.

Alan R

Let's Plan a Holiday

Now is the time of year when we all should all be planning and booking our summer holidays. The current restrictions are preventing us from doing that. I was browsing through an early 1936 walking holiday brochure organised by the Wayfaring Association which offered a variety of walking holiday both at home and abroad at what seemed amazing prices. Here is a selection of what I found.

Walking Tours of the British Isles

The Inclusive Charge provides for:-

Breakfast and evening meal at Boarding House or Hotel (Youth Hostel in the case of the Yorkshire Dales) from evening meal on first day to breakfast on the last day of the Tour.

Cost of travel on Cairngorms Tour. Any travel expenses on the other three Towers extra.

Services of experienced leaders throughout the Tour.

Extras - The following are regarded as extra and are therefore not included in the advertised price.

Travel to commencing point and from end of Tour.

Admission fees to places of interest, drinks, gratuities, baths, pier or toll dues and single rooms.

Cairngorms 8 days £4-0-0

Assembly Point: Ballater

Itinerary- Braemar, Lochnagar, Morrone, Ben Macdhui, Lairig Ghru, Coylum Bridge, Aviemore, Craigellachie.

Departures in June, July August, September.

Yorkshire Dales 8 Days £2-15-0 15 Days £4-18-6

Assembly Point: Skipton

Itinerary: Addington High Moors, Bolton Abbey and Woods, Grassington, Malham Moor, Gordale Scar, Great Whernside, Langstrothdale, Ribblesdale, Penyghent, Ingleton, Kingsdale, Dentdale, Garside, Birkdale, Stake Pass, Skipton.

Departures in June July August and September

Lakeland Tour

8 Days £3-17-6

Assemble Point: Windermere

Itinerary: Windermere, Coniston, Wrynose, Eskdale, Black Sail, Scarf Gap, Styland, Great Gable, Buttermere, Keswick, Helvellyn, Ullswater, Windermere.

The Wayfaring Association also offered walking tour holidays in Europe and a couple of examples are given:

Rhineland and Moselle Walking Tour 8 days £6-15-0 15 days £9-10-0

Cost Includes: Third class train from London and 2nd class Steamer Travel, Full board and accommodation from breakfast on Sunday morning to lunch on the last day of the Tour. During the height of the season guests will be provided with a picnic box on the train. The services of an English-speaking German Leader for the duration of the Tour.

Itinerary: The first day of the Tour at Cologne and then we set off to explore the beautiful Rhineland and Moselle. The second week is further spent exploring the Rhineland as far south as Bingen.

Norway Walking Tour 14 days £13-12-0

Cost includes: Third class travel Newcastle to Bergen return. Full board and accommodation for the duration of the Tour. Services of an English speaking Norwegian Guide appointed by the Norwegian YHA.

Itinerary: Bergen, Samnanger Fjord, Kvamskogen Forest, Steinskog, Tokagjel, Hardanger, Foffli, Tungabu, Geiteryggen, Aurland, Uppheim, Bergan.

Departs 18th July and 8th August

While these prices are given in pounds shillings and pence and appear to be incredibly low, you must remember that over that period of time, inflation has taken its toll. £1 in 1936 is equivalent to £71.70 at today's prices.

But the 15 days in the Rhineland Walking Tour at £9 10 shilling, (equivalent to £681.15 today) does appear to be good value for money.

Michael C