

# Ramblers Gems



A Spring Vale Rambling Class Publication

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### Nearly There

The first weekend of March was planned to be the last walk of our Winter 2020 Season for the Spring Vale Class but unfortunately this was not to be. This promised a gentle stroll from St. Peter's Church in Salesbury, a look back in time as we passed the Grade 11 listed Lovely Hall, field paths to Copster Green and then passing Bolton Hall and New Hall. The route then followed the Ribble Way onto Dinkley Footbridge before taking the gentle but uphill paths back to the cricket field at Salesbury.

Our Syllabus is due out shortly but ongoing restrictions mean the first 2 rambles are postponed. Our first walk together will be on 2<sup>nd</sup> April, the Good Friday ramble around Stocks Reservoir. We will follow all guide lines at the time. Social distancing will be adhered to as our members' health is paramount in all our planning.

**Glenda B**

## Spring is in the Air

It is a sure sign that Spring is on its way when the first bluebells are seen, making the most spectacular sight when seen in a mass beneath the trees or on a banking. The other sign that everyone tries to be the first to spot is the arrival of frog spawn in our ponds and road draining ditches.

Look out for frog spawn which gathers as a cluster in a jelly mat in shallow water. Toad spawn is characterised by its long strings wrapped around the stems of upright submerged water plants. The folded leaves of water plants may signify that a newt has laid its eggs within them.

Frogs can start to breed from between two and three years old, often returning to the very pond where they were hatched. The females lay their spawn in well-vegetated, shaded, shallow ponds. As the eggs mature, the clusters of spawn swell and float to the water's surface. There may be so many clusters in a pond that they merge to look like one large jelly mass. Frogspawn is therefore not difficult to miss! Remember there's no such thing as too much frogspawn, so don't worry if your own pond is full of it! In fact, the more the better – for only around one in 50 eggs laid will survive into adulthood, to return once again to the pond.

We are all still under COVID-19 lockdown restrictions and if you are looking for new activities that can safely be conducted within the regulations, then record the number of amphibians that you spot and send off the results of your sightings to the website for the [Fresh Water Habitats Trust](#)

**Michael C**

## March Nature

Spring is in the air and many animals are coming out of hibernation. Set aside a corner of your garden for wild plants such as nettle and bramble. This will provide cover for small mammals and food for a variety of insects including butterflies.

Butterflies will fly on sunny days - Peacock, comma and brimstone.

On your walks and in your gardens look out for flower-bees and the bee-fly. They will be found near lungwort and will be looking for nectar among the blooms of primrose, lesser celandine, butterbur or wood anemone. These plants are also important sources of food for hoverflies and solitary bees.

Some birds are already breeding: - noisy rooks in their treetop colonies and coastal gannets. The first chiffchaffs cash in on the insect supply and sing from bushes in sunny woods.

On coastal grassland, wheatears, fresh in from Africa, are on their way to upland breeding haunts.

You may see young rabbits above ground for the first time in fields and roadside verges.

Now is a good time to look in streams for freshwater invertebrates, like mayfly and stonefly, as they prepare to emerge as adult insects.

Many invertebrates are getting ready to emerge at this time of year. Look for them as they are at their largest and most easily spotted. You don't need a net, lift up a rock and see what's there, but replace it carefully.

It's amphibian breeding season so there are loads of frogs. Take photos whilst they are distracted with each other. Keep quiet, wear dull clothing and keep low down



There is a day for everything and apparently the 16<sup>th</sup> March is Curlew Day!



The curlew can be seen around the whole UK coastline with one of the largest concentrations found at Morecambe Bay. Curlews are a coastal wetland bird and favour Morecambe Bay for its large exposed tidal range where they can find worms to eat.

However, in order to raise their young, they require open moorland or rough and damp pastures. During the spring and summer, curlews migrate to their breeding grounds – mostly in upland areas – raising their chicks in areas of rough pasture, heather moors and wetlands. One of my favourite places to hear and see them is in the Wycoller Country Park near to the View Point Rocks. Curlews are in real trouble. Regional and possibly even country-level extinctions are now a possibility.

Here is a link to a Wycoller wildlife [LEAFLET](#) and a [MAP](#). But please do not visit whilst travel and other Covid-19 restrictions are in place. The Lapwings will also be laying eggs in ground nests so make sure you do not stand on any...do not take dogs onto the Access Land.



**Jean G**

## The Heron Symbol

Sadly, the heron does not seem to be mentioned in the book *A Short Philosophy of Birds*, Dubois and Rousseau, 2019. See Vol 2, Issue 4 – 22<sup>nd</sup> Jan 2021.

However, I have done some research! As many of you know it is one of my favourite birds. The others being the curlew and the jay, plus a few others.

***Quote** - The heron symbolizes stillness and tranquillity, and how these two things are needed to recognize opportunities. It also signifies determination, because there will be plenty of marshes and ponds that we will wade through in life as well. The meaning of the heron speaks about a sense of independence. The heron meaning reflects how to take pride in all our achievements. It represents the gift of wisdom and good judgment. The heron symbolises resourcefulness. Like the heron spirit animal, we can make things happen even if we have so little to work with, and even if the odds are against us. The heron speaks about our sense of independence.*

*The heron is a solitary bird. Solitude can be good for us and being alone can teach us so many things so make the most of your solitude during Lockdown. The heron can help us take note of our domesticity i.e., spending time nesting and building a home so please make the most of Staying Home during Lockdowns and Tiers.*

*As with the tiger, when the heron spirit animal comes into your life, it seeks to teach you a lesson on the power of precision. When you do something with precision, you also achieve a high level of effectiveness. **Unquote***

My spiritual animal is The Tiger - The tiger spirit animal brings with it various symbols and meanings. Tiger symbolism is most commonly associated with strength and courage, as well as determination and independence.

We don't see many tigers on our walks so no point including them in Ramblers' Gems. We do, however, see a lot of herons - especially on my walks!!! What

Barbara S



## The World is Closed

Written by Peter D Hehir

They said the world was closed today  
So I went to have a look,  
I found it with the shutters down  
And the phone was off the hook.

So I stood there for a little while  
But no one was around,  
Then silence came and startled me  
With the most alarming sound.

I asked him where the others were,  
And why the streets were bare,  
He whispered 'Life had ran away  
While death was playing there'

'Oh no' I said 'It can't be true  
For life is not afraid'  
'But no one ever goes' he said  
'Where death has ever played.'

I understood and walked away  
As Hope was standing there  
With Courage in her afterglow  
And the sunlight in her hair.

She said 'Go home to those you love  
This is no place to be,  
For if we walk these streets today  
Then no one shall be free'.

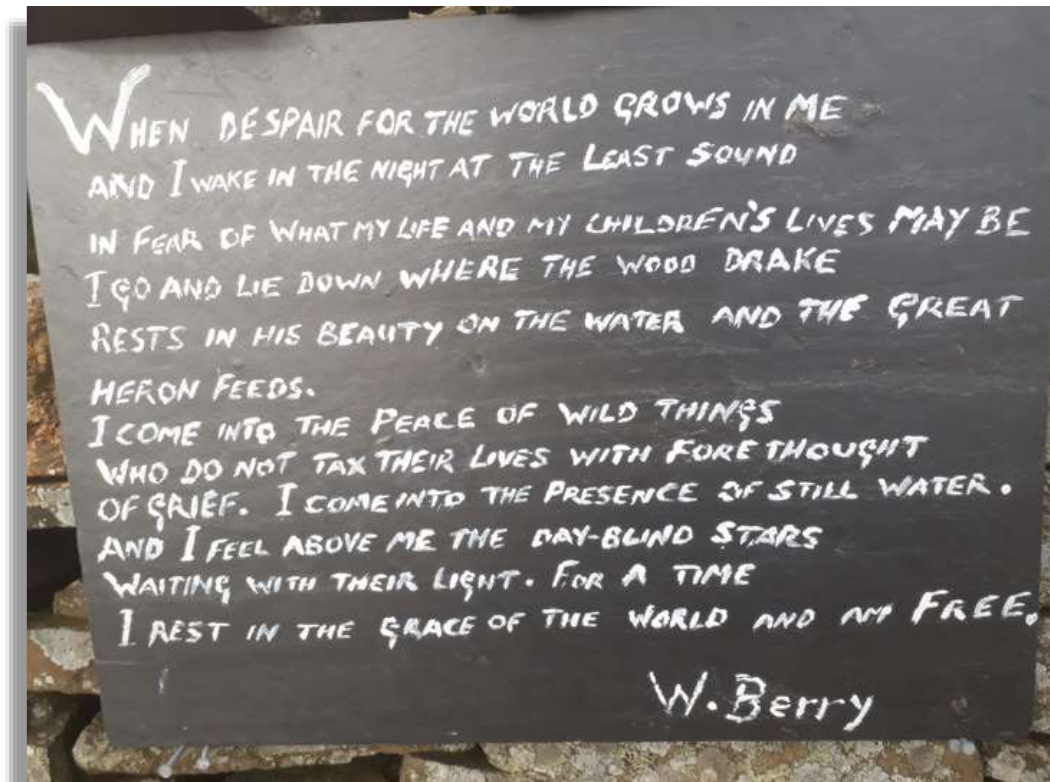
She threw her light to lead the way  
And showed me where to go,  
The very road that life had gone  
Where the future flowers grow.

Then death showed me another way  
But I didn't want to look,  
So I stumbled home in time for tea  
And I read another book.

It was called *The World is Closed Today*  
And the streets we shouldn't roam,  
The first line said 'Just please be safe'  
And the ending - 'Stay at Home' stay safe.

## When Despair for the World Grows in Me

While out walking the other day on the hills above Accrington which is below the mass of Hameldon Hill, I came across these inspirational verses written by someone, but chalked on a board and left leaning up against the wall. I thought I would share this photograph with you all.



### The Ramblers

The Ramblers is a national charitable organisation that is at the heart of walking. At a local level, activities for members and volunteers are organised through its 485 local groups and 59 regional Areas.

The Ramblers' vision is a country where everyone enjoys the outdoors on foot and wants to help create a country where everyone understands the benefits of walking for both recreation and shorter journeys,

With the help of its members, last year the Ramblers have:

- Saved over 800 paths from being blocked, closed or badly diverted.
- Encouraged over 88,000 people to start walking and discover its many health benefits.
- Safeguarded 140,000 miles of public path and 1 million hectares of open access land in England and Wales.

The following Ramblers Groups organise walking programmes and other activities within our area of North East Lancashire.

Blackburn and Darwen

Burnley and Pendle

Clitheroe

Hyndburn

Rossendale

NE Lancs Coach Rambles

If you value, the public rights of way that form our extensive network of footpaths and bridleways or enjoy the freedom of walking across open access upland areas, then help the Ramblers fight to keep these open and accessible for all.

By supporting the work of the Ramblers, you are helping to protect this unique national heritage as well as helping more people to enjoy the great outdoors.

**Michael C**

## The Walkers' Prayer

(adapted for Covid)

**Lord** bless all walkers that we may live long and healthy lives, especially bless our leaders for they are all-powerful and lead us through the wilderness. May they religiously undertake a risk assessment and instruct us in the protocols for Covid awareness before each walk.

**Yea** though they lead us down the valleys and over the hills, we shall feel no pain for our hearts, minds and muscles are numb and our hands drying out from continuous use of disinfecting hand gel.

**Let** them know their north from their south and their east from their west.

**Let** the sun shine so that we may have a faint idea in which direction we are heading.

**Grant**, O Lord, that they curb their tongues and not tell us that we have walked 7 miles when we know that we have walked 10, or that the hill we just climbed was the last one (before the next one).

**Also** let them know the difference between a gentle slope and a steep cliff.

**Give** them the ability to count, so that they know the number of walkers, so that none shall go astray or exceed 30 in number.

**Prevent** the leaders from starting to walk the minute everyone has caught up and from using the excuse of keeping everyone two metres apart.



**Curse** those walkers who do not observe social distancing or overtake the leader. Let their sticks break, their laces come undone and their flasks leak.

**Curse** also those who disappear into the woods without telling the back marker, who shall be given enough puff to blow a whistle even when choosing to wear a mask.

**Grant**, O Lord, sunshine at all times, but not too hot, cooling breezes, but not strong winds, shade needed and incomparable views when we are resting.

**Spare** us from brambles, nettles and other obstructions.



**Lead** us not down the wrong paths.

**Finally** Lord let us arrive back at our cars safe and sound for we are children of the wilderness, the blind being led by the blind, and we are shattered.

**Give** us strength and good health to turn up for the next walk, for we are of the tribe stupid and know no better.

**We** ask all this with tongue in cheek, ever conscious that many a true word is spoken in jest.

**A-men, wo-men, children and little dogs**

**Submitted by Eleanor**