

Ramblers Gems



A Spring Vale Rambling Class Publication

Volume 2 Issue 21

21st May 2021

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

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 **Latest Walking Update /Hérons and Hippos**
- 2 **Famous Sons of Read Hall**
- 3 **Ogham and the Lunar Tree Calendar – Part 3**
- 4 **The Wicked Hawthorn Tree / The Willow**
- 5 **Our Woods and Trees /
The Importance of Walking**

Latest Walking Update

Spring Vale Ramblers' organised walks continue to be exempt from legal gathering limits and can take place as long as we continue to follow the covid-secure guidance as issued by the Ramblers. This includes maintaining a physical distance, recording the names of members attending on our walks and carrying out a risk assessment.

In addition, from Monday 17 May:
Some of the travel restrictions have been revised.
Car-sharing and coach travel can resume in England. Please take sensible precautions and follow the government advice on safer travel, to and from the start of our walks.

It is now possible to socialise indoors in a group of up to 6 people or 2 households, including Up to 30 people who can meet outside. Pubs and cafés are now open for indoor eating and drinking.

Thank you to all our members on our walks who have been faithfully abiding with the rules.

Michael C

Hérons and Hippos

The walk last Saturday with Spring Vale Rambling Class took us up into the Brock Valley commencing from Bilsborrow on the A6. It seems ironic that whenever Barbara is present on a ramble, we always manage to see herons and the Brock Valley walk was no exception. As we were walking along the towpath on the Lancaster canal, we passed a heron standing sentinel like, casually watching us as we passed on the far side of the canal. Moments later, a second heron, was observed flying low down the centre of the canal.



It was on this ramble that I saw my first Swift of the season. They do seem to have been late arriving this year and there are worrying signs that Swift numbers have been declining over recent years. To counter this, some people have installed artificial nest boxes to the side of their houses, aiding their recovery. They really are an amazing bird for they feed, mate and even sleep for short spells whilst gliding high in the sky; only landing to lay eggs and feed their young. They winter in mid Africa alongside swallows. It's amazing to think that the swifts that you see skimming over a Lancashire field were just a few weeks ago soaring over the heads of Water Buffalo or Hippopotamus.

Tony C

Famous Sons of Read Hall

Read Hall is situated off the Whalley Road between Whalley and the hamlet of Read. It is a location we have regularly walked through on our circular walks out from the Spring Wood Car Park. The original building by Roger Nowell was of three-storey, built round three sides of a courtyard. He acquired the estate in the 16th century after the Dissolution of Whalley Abbey.



The current Read Hall

It was Alexander Nowell, an English theologian and Dean of St Pauls who was born at Read Hall in the Elizabethan age who in the popular story, was the inventor of bottled beer while out on a fishing expedition on the River Ash in Herefordshire.

Izaak Walton describes the story in his book "The Complete Angler". Nowell had packed up all his fishing gear, his wife packed him a ham and cheese sandwich. He stopped by the corner pub on his way to the river and had them fill a glass bottle up with beer for him. He made sure they sealed it up good and tight with a cork. When he had finished fishing, he accidentally left the still half full bottle on the riverbank. Several days later he returned to do some more fishing and saw his old beer on the ground. When he went to drink it, the cork opened with a loud bang (the beer had fermented further over the past few days). He found it to be extra fizzy and quite delicious.



The Lodge Read Hall on Whalley Road

A later Roger Nowell (1582–1623) was Sheriff of Lancashire in 1610 and was the magistrate at the time of the Lancashire Witches. In 1612 he would be the one to send them off to Lancaster Castle Gaol for trial and eventual execution.

The estate passed to his grandson, Roger (1605 - 1695), who raised an army during the Civil War at his own expense to help defend Lathom House for the Royalists. During the Civil War, a skirmish in 1643 known as the Battle of Read Bridge in the vicinity of the hall ended in a decisive victory for the Parliamentarian forces. After several more generations of Nowells the house was eventually sold on the death of Alexander Nowell in 1772. His widow returned to London with their daughter.



Read Bridge

The current hall was built between 1818 and 1825 for Richard Fort, a wealthy partner in a Manchester Calico textile printing firm. When Richard died in 1829, the estate passed to his son John Fort, later the MP for Clitheroe.

The new hall was designed by architect George Webster of Kendal when he was only 21. (Webster also built Underley Hall, near Kirby Lonsdale Westmorland between 1825-1828 for Alexander Nowell). John Fort died in 1842 and was succeeded by his son Richard who was a High Sheriff of Lancashire for 1854 and M.P. for Clitheroe from 1865 to 1868.

The rest of the park includes Home Farm and Lodge in Whalley Road, both by Webster at the same time. Home Farm was built as a model farm and converted into living accommodation in the 20th century.

Michael C

Ogham and the Lunar Tree Calendar – Part 3

Hawthorn, 6th Moon of the Celtic Year

(May 13 – June 9)

The hawthorn, or May tree, is a particularly sacred and holy tree wherever it is found. In the Celtic Ogham tree alphabet, it represents the letter H, or Huath. Pronounced "OO-ah" or "hOO-uh".

As well as having magical properties, the hawthorn is an incredibly useful tree. When it is cut back to make hedgerows its thorns become sharp, providing an excellent barrier for sheep and other livestock. The berries 'haws' of the hawthorn provide food for birds and can be made into jellies, syrups, preserves, wines and herbal medicine. The young leaves are nutritious, have a nutty flavour, and can be eaten raw, giving it the nickname of the 'bread and cheese' tree. The original Maypoles were made of hawthorn.

The hawthorn is a very hardy tree and particularly tolerant of other plants growing close to it, supporting lots of wildlife which both encourage biodiversity. There is an ancient belief that the tree will protect from fire. Every year a hawthorn "globe" would be woven and brought into the house as insurance against fire damage of any kind. The following year the globe would be replaced, the old one being burned and scattered on the fields to ensure a healthy harvest.

The white flowers of the hawthorn, which blossom in the late spring (hence the name May blossom), have five petals, with the matching sepals looking exactly like a star. It was considered bad luck to bring the blossoms into the house.



The Hawthorn is known in Ireland as the fairy tree. It is often referred to as the gentle, lone or thorn bush, as it is disrespectful to mention the fairies by name. It is believed to be extremely bad luck to cut one down, remove branches, or even hang things upon it (except at Beltane when this was customary) in case you disturb the little folk.

In Britain, the hawthorn was associated with love and springtime, as the warm weather of May would bring couples together under the sweet blossoms of the hawthorn. Hawthorn branches hung above a door were believed to protect from evil spirits rather than incurring their wrath.

In ancient Greece, likewise, the hawthorn was associated with love and marriage. Hawthorn crowns were worn by brides as decorative headwear and a hawthorn branch would be used as a wedding torch, perhaps where the phrase 'carry a torch for' comes from, meaning to love or have strong feelings for.

The Christians believed that hawthorn branches formed the crown of thorns that adorned the head of Jesus Christ at the Crucifixion. There is a legend that Joseph of Arimathea, resting on Wearyall Hill in Glastonbury, leaned on his staff and in doing so pushed it into the ground. The staff sprouted into a thorn tree, and a Christian chapel was built at the site. Traditionally, this magical and holy tree, the "Glastonbury Thorn", blossoms at Christmas time and a sprig is sent to the Queen every year.



On a medicinal level the hawthorn berries, leaves and flowers are said to strengthen the heart and circulation and to balance blood pressure. Rich in vitamins and other nutrients, the plant has been used for such purposes for generations and is even thought to have been a part of the Neolithic diet.



Hawthorn timber doesn't get to any great size, but is very hard, and both tree and root wood is useful for making small things – pretty, polished boxes, carved handles for tools and sticks.

Jean G

The Wicked Hawthorn Tree

by WB Yeats

O, but I saw a solemn sight;
Said the rambling, shambling travelling-man;
Castle Dargan's ruin all lit
Lovely ladies dancing in it.

What though they dance; those days are gone;
said the wicked, crooked hawthorn tree;
Lovely lady and gallant man
Are cold blown dust or a bit of bone.

O, what is life but a mouthful of air;
Said the rambling, shambling travelling-man;
Yet all the lovely things that were
Live, for I saw them dancing there.

Nobody knows what may befall;
said the wicked, crooked hawthorn tree;
I have stood so long by a gap in the wall
May be I shall not die at all.

The Willow

By Walter de la Mare

Leans now the fair willow, dreaming
Amid her locks of green.
In the driving snow she was parched and cold,
And in midnight hath been
Swept by blasts of the void night,
Lashed by the rains.
Now of that wintry dark and bleak
No memory remains.

In mute desire she sways softly;
Thrilling sap up-flows;
She praises God in her beauty and grace,
Whispers delight. And there flows
A delicate wind from the Southern seas,
Kissing her leaves. She sighs.
While the birds in her tresses make merry;
Burns the Sun in the skies.

Contributions by Pesto Cenorr

On the Track - The Valley of Stone Greenway

This is the sixth in a series of articles that I have investigated on the once thriving railway routes throughout Lancashire that later became redundant. This disused railway track once formed the line between Rawtenstall to Bacup with a later extension to link through to Rochdale.

The Rawtenstall to Bacup railway line opened in two stages. In 1848 a single line only ran from Rawtenstall to Waterfoot station. 1852 saw the extension taking it onto Bacup with stations now also at Cloughfold and Stacksteads. The line was doubled in 1880 due to the increase in both passenger and goods services. The year 1880 was the same year that the line from Bacup to Rochdale was opened. Passenger and freight services operated until the Beeching cuts in 1966, with the last passenger train running on 5 December 1966 and the track being lifted in 1969.

The Irwell valley is quite narrow, so the line had to incorporate many engineering features in its short 5-mile length including 14 crossings over the River Irwell alone. There were many over and under bridges, embankments and cuttings, with tunnels at Thrutch Gorge (The Glen) in Waterfoot. Most of the bridges have been demolished or infilled in the years following closure. The two long tunnels at Newchurch now form part of a foot and cycle 'greenway'.

The Valley of Stone Greenway is an ambitious 11 mile long walking and cycling route connecting Rawtenstall in the west to Waterfoot, Bacup and Whitworth on the Lancashire border and finally onto Rochdale. It is largely an off-road route along the railway line and when fully completed will provide a travel alternative to using the busy roads running along the main valley floor, the full potential of which will only be realised once it is finally finished. This linear route provides many opportunities to access the many footpaths that run across the wild and open Rooley Moor. The area has become very popular with cyclist as graded routes have been established across the moors, based around the Lee and Cragg Quarry cycling hubs.

Spring Vale Ramblers have walked several sections of the Greenway when completing the Famine Road walk from Waterfoot.

Eleanor

Our Woods and Trees

We all love woods, and The Woodland Trust has recently published an information-packed, 250-page State of the UK's Woods and Trees report. Their vision for a UK rich in native woods and trees has never been clearer. Benefits that trees bring is growing in demand as the urgency of the climate and nature crisis increases. Yet at the same time threats faced by UK woodlands continue to escalate. This Report examines in minute and fascinating detail the state of woods and trees in the UK today, the daily threats they face and what we need to do to ensure their survival.

Sadly, many of its headline findings make for stark and alarming reading.

- Although woodland cover is slowly increasing, woodland wildlife is decreasing.
- Only 7% of the UK's native woods are in a healthy state.
- Since 1970, woodland bird numbers have dropped by 29%.

The [State of the UK's Woods and Trees report](#) gives crucial evidence of the extent, condition and wildlife value of trees and woodland in 2021. The painstakingly researched document will allow the Trust to frame stronger asks of governments, take more informed decisions about what they do and focus their activities where they will make the most impact.

There is hope on the horizon too. The report's findings prove just how important the work of the Trust is: many of the steps that need to be taken are already their key priorities. The challenges UK woods and trees face are not unsurmountable. But overcoming them will take urgent action from governments, continuing work from environmental charities and ongoing support from its members. The full State of the UK's Woods and Trees report has been sent to all of the UK's Governments, so they know the extent of the work to be done.

Trees play an important part in our everyday lives which the pandemic has thrown into even sharper focus. Trees bring nature and beauty to our gardens, line our streets, enhance our parks and create havens for wildlife and people in our nearby woods.

Glenda B

The Importance of Walking

When we ask ourselves "What make us human" it is language that usually comes top of the list, carrying meaning, content, and culture. High in this list would be the use of tools, that have evolved over time, allowing us to train other humans in their use. The exceptional investment in bringing up children, raising and caring for extended periods also appears on that list. The cooking of our food will also be there. No other species cooks their food, but how do we gather and transport this food for cooking?

These are all exclusive human traits, but one entry is often missing from the list. An extraordinary adaptation, the ability to WALK, standing on two feet, with an upright spine. Walking enabled our ancestors to travel out of Africa and spread out over all the world. It is a unique ability which defines human history. Walking brings many physical advantages. Our hands are free, meaning we can carry food, weapons and children. The stability that an upright gait allows has enabled us to throw stones or spears and assault our enemies, carrying off the spoils, disappearing quietly into the night.

Our minds have been made mobile, enabling us to reach to the horizons of our planet and beyond. More widely, we know that walking improves mood, perhaps more than we think it does. Walking can be a vaccine against anxiety and depression, both of which may be associated with an increasingly sedentary society. Creative impulses stimulated by walking, may help you to overcome life's problems.

I am of course preaching to the converted. Walking improves every aspect of our social and psychological functioning. It is a simple life-enhancing, health-building prescription that we all need. It should be taken in regular doses, large or small, day in, day out, embracing nature and in our towns and cities. Tread the paths and pavements, get the wind in your face, feel the rain, and sense the ground under your feet. Talk to yourself, or in company. Get into the rhythm of walking, let your mind wander, deliberate; contemplate; journey into your past, investigate possible futures; or think of nothing at all.

Walking arises from our evolutionary past but is our future too.

Alan R