

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/>

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 Big Garden Birdwatch /
On approaching Pendle Hill**
- 2 Ancient History on our Doorstep**
- 3 The Road Not Taken
Lancashire Wildlife Trust**
- 4 Walking from Home**
- 5 Winter Tree Identification**

Big Garden Birdwatch

Don't forget that this is the weekend to carry out the Big Garden Birdwatch. It is very easy to take part, all you do is spend only an hour counting the birds you see in your garden or from your balcony.

Record the highest number of each bird species you see at any one time – not a running total. Ignore any birds that are flying overhead. Using a pair of binoculars can help but are not essential. Use a bird identification book or check online if you are unsure of the birds common name.

Then tell the RSPB what you saw by submitting your results online at rspb.org.uk/birdwatch from 29 January until 19 February. Every count is important so, if you don't see anything, still submit this result.

Eleanor

On approaching Pendle Hill

The path up to Pendle. The sleeping beast. The purple skies.

Folk tell of witches burned or branded or drowned or hung up there.

They tell of failed crops, stillborn calves, murrain. Always the women. Always the witches. Never the men.

Never the frost, never mastitis or scours or footrot; never blackthorn or angel trumpet, hemlock, ragwort or lupine.

Never in drink or lust or fear or guilt. Never in penance or madness. It's always the women. It's always the witches.

The path past Pendle. The buried bones. The violaceous skies.

By Ben Myers and appears in Benjamin Myer's collection Heathcliff Adrift. Submitted by Barbara S



Ancient History on your doorstep.

I am ashamed to say that despite living in Darwen for all my life (bar the first 8 weeks!) it wasn't until the second lockdown (or lockdown light) that I decided to visit the area called Ashleigh Barrow on Ashleigh St. The Barrow is about 30 yards in diameter, sitting on a promontory. The area now is a pleasant, grassed area, well-tended by supporters – the Ashleigh Conservation Group.

The word 'barrow' as we learnt from Tony C in a previous newsletter is a name for a burial mound in ancient times. These areas may also be called tumulus.

Early accounts of the Ashleigh site state that it was destroyed in the 19th Century during the building of Ashleigh House (now also demolished). The current barrow being a 'reconstruction' if you like. The area was investigated – unsure when – and John Dixon, "Journeys through Brigantia" 2003 reports that *"ten interments appear to have been made, one being burnt bones, the others, having been enclosed in urns, the majority of which are badly broken. Two urns also contained "incense cups" and another a 7 1/2-inch bronze dagger or knife."*

The design of the urns is similar to those from the Middle Bronze Age, all but two of the urns were found within an area 21 feet by 14 feet whilst one was 40 feet away. They were, with one exception, placed in the earth with the orifice pointing upwards and were covered with slabs, the depth at which they were found varying from 1 to 2 feet"

The remains of the urns are in display in the reference library at Darwen (or at least they were).

The urns on display in the library



Many local superstitions have been attached to the barrow, with people speaking of the place being haunted by "boggarts" and children having been known to take their clogs or shoes off to walk past barefoot in the night!!

Children were playing happily when we walked here. It is easy to tag this area onto a walk in the Whitehall area of Darwen.



Jane C

The Road Not Taken

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveller, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy & wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages & ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I -
I took the one less travelled by,
And that has made all the difference.

Robert Frost 1874-1963.



Robert Lee Frost was an American poet. His work was initially published in England before it was published in the United States. He is best known for his realistic depictions of rural life and his command of American colloquial speech. He frequently wrote about settings from rural life in New England in the early 20th century, using them to examine complex social and philosophical themes.

Submitted by Alan R

Lancashire Wildlife Trust

The third in a series of articles covering countryside and environmental charities that require our help and support.

The Trust is part of the National Wildlife Trusts movement which is the UK's leading conservation charity dedicated to all wildlife. The Wildlife Trust for Lancashire, Manchester and North Merseyside was founded in 1962 and from then has grown to be the largest nature conservation body in our area. The Trust works directly at a grass roots, local level while still being part of a strong national movement.

The Head Office for the Trust is based at the Barn within Cuerden Valley Park, Bamber Bridge and has the support of over 28,000 members, with the direct assistance of 1,200 active volunteers who help with practical management work, all types of planning matters, campaigning and working in finance.

The Trust has many special places under its care, acquiring and managing many of them as nature reserves. Their showpiece Nature Reserve is at **Brockholes**, adjacent to Junction 31 on the M6 motorway. This is a former sand and gravel quarry that has been transformed into a natural haven for a variety of wildlife and is well worth a visit.

The reserves closest to us and which we have walked through many times are highlighted: **Longworth Clough Egerton**, once within the Longworth Hall estate and it now forms a key part of the West Pennine Moors Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

Pleasington Old Hall Wood and Wildlife Garden in Blackburn. The wood is a narrow strip of land that has been cleared of invasive species and now is a haven for our native tree and wildlife. The walled garden has been restored from a neglected ruin into a natural paradise using a range of wildlife gardening techniques.

Dean Wood at Rivington nestles in a deep, narrow wooded clough in the West Pennine Moors and is an unspoiled haven for a fantastic array of birds and wildflowers.

The Warton Crag Reserve is dominated by limestone cliffs that support a variety of wildflowers which attract rare butterflies.

Michael C

Walking from Home

At this present moment we are all restricted to walking locally and keeping the distance that we drive to start our walk to a minimum. This has resulted in us exploring the walking routes that are literally on our doorsteps by walking from home. I live on the outskirts of Blackburn and although I have walked from home it is not something that I do regularly so the other day I set off along the Arran Trail, the local footpath that links Guide Village to Knusden. The footpath and surrounding area has been created into a local nature reserve and is now a haven for wildlife. The two manmade ponds are home to coots, moorhens, and the occasional visit of a heron. The site was a former colliery known as the Lol Hole Pit which closed in 1919 and the site cleared. The only evidence remaining are the shale waste tips, reclaimed by nature.

The route continued down to the hamlet of Knuzden Brook which was the site of a disastrous mill fire at the Knuzden Brook Mill in 1885. Seven people were killed including two constables as the floor on which they were tackling the fire gave way. The destruction of the mill was a terrible blow to the families of the village as it was the major employer.

I continued my walk passing through the housing estate at Intake to arrive on the Whitebirk end of the Leeds and Liverpool Canal which I followed heading in the direction of Blackburn. I was now passing the sites of many of the old cotton weaving and spinning mill that made Blackburn "Cotton Town". The mill sites are now just shells of their former glory, some still stood proud and I tried to imagine the hive of industrial activity taking place back in their glory days.



When I reached the Eden Street bridge it was time to leave the canal and head out along Lambeth Street to arrive at the Victorian Queens Park. This public park was opened in 1887 and includes a serpentine lake and former boat house. I remember having Saturday morning trips in the late 1970's, hiring a rowing boat and enjoying time on the lake. Originally the Park was designed to simply provide ornamental gardens with facilities for boating, swimming, skating, cricket, and other athletic games, with certain areas well planted with trees and some flower beds to enliven the scene.



It was now time to leave the park and head up the hill to arrive at the hospital site on Haslingden Road. The site contains the old Blackburn Workhouse building that still dominates the skyline overlooking the town, a stern warning in a bygone time of what could befall you if you fell on hard times. It was from here that I decided to take a small diversion to walk along the paths that follow around the reservoirs of Fishmoor and Guide, providing an excellent vista of moorland around the Jubilee Tower at Darwen. My walk from home was almost complete and I had explored areas that I had not walked before that were full of interest and all aspects of natural habitats.

This was a 7 mile walk that has the possibility of being started from several locations and has the great advantage of only incorporating one uphill section.

Michael C

Winter Tree Identification

Many years ago, I went on a Winter Tree Identification course with John Lamb, Senior Conservation Officer for the Lancashire Wildlife Trust at Foxhill Bank Nature Reserve, Oswaldtwistle and it changed how I thought about trees. John is a local lad born in Bamber Bridge, South Ribble, completing a B.Sc. (Hons.) in Environmental Biology at Liverpool University before heading to Kent for a M.Sc. in Landscape Ecology, Design and Maintenance. He is a full member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) and has been employed as a Conservation Officer with the Lancashire Wildlife Trust since 1998. Thankfully, he has never left Lancashire!

With John I have done other day courses at The Coppice and Peel Park, Accrington and woodland activities at Castle Quarry Wood, Clitheroe. He is an inspiration and thanks to him I came to love trees, nature and volunteering in woodlands.

I spent a couple of hours in the round wood at Memorial Walk Great Harwood as John was undertaking a biodiversity survey of the trees, mosses, lichens and other plant species.

I could not believe how many rare and common plants he identified which meant that the wood was designated a Biological Heritage Site (BHS). Trees play a vital role in the urban ecosystem, by helping to support a great variety of wildlife which people can enjoy close to home. John is the author of *Lancashire: a journey into the wild* which is an exploration and celebration of modern Lancashire's unspoilt and lesser-known corners.

Over the last 20 plus years I have led many a Winter Tree ID walk with young people and families using this quite simple guide to get people interested in trees.

Print off a copy and, as the buds and catkins start to appear, try to find these winter twigs on a local walk near you.

Barbara S

Winter twigs



Ash Field Maple Birch Alder Elder Hazel Beech Horse Chestnut Rowan



Oak Lime Lilac Hawthorn Blackthorn Larch Sycamore Dog Rose Elm