

# Ramblers Gems



A Spring Vale Rambling Class Publication

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## March Musings

“March” come from the Roman “Martius” and was originally the first month of the Roman Calendar and was named after Mars, the god of war.

March was beginning of our calendar year until 1752, when we changed to the Gregorian calendar and the new year began on 1<sup>st</sup> January.

Anglo-Saxons called the month Hlyd monath ( stormy month) or Hraed monath (Rugged month).

### Weather-lore, beliefs and sayings:

When March comes in like a lion it goes out like a lamb

A dry March and a wet May

Fill barns and bays with corn and hay

Jane C

## Lent Lily

One of the flowers most associated with March is the narcissus (wild daffodil), named after the boy in Greek mythology, who changed into a flower.

The daffodil became popular in Wales in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Lloyd George used it to symbolise Wales at the 1911 investiture. In England the daffodil inspired William Wordsworth amongst others to write poetry. His “Daffodils” poem is often read at funerals and most folk can quote the first few lines, my favourite verse is the last one:

“For oft, when on my couch I lie  
In vacant or in pensive mood,  
The flash upon that inward eye  
Which is the bliss of solitude;  
And then my heart with pleasure fills  
And dances with the daffodils”

Wordsworth 1770 – 1850



Jane C

## The Genuine Article

When each issue of Ramblers Gems is published via email or Facebook, I see a request for articles. Have you contributed anything yet? I have been writing since the first issues back in 2020. One size does not fit all. Some of my articles may resonate with you, but others might have felt like watching rust develop on a car.

You can only write from your own perspective and experiences of life which might brush gently against some readers, completely sweep past others but hopefully will bond to other readers and generate a memory for them.

Is it easy to write for Ramblers Gems? Sometimes yes and at other times no. I experience writers' block and hit a brick wall, but thankfully not for long. I might get a flash of an idea, a fleeting moment of inspiration.

So, where do these come from? I read a lot so it can be a few words on a page *'like stinging sheets of windblown rain'*. What did you visualise when you read those words? For me it was the AGM walk during one of those 'named storms' and flash flooding on Watery Lane, Darwen when the A666 was closed.

*'The heavens opened'* on a Norber Erratics ramble but I remember the warmth, tea and cake in the café near the Millennium Stone in the lovely little village of Clapham.



Inspirations come from years of observation, the tapestries woven from sight, sound and touch. A wood or an unusually shaped tree. I have seen faces, otters and green men in tree trunks. The articles I write are my personal vision of the world. Simply put, a distillation of moments.

I have always been interested in Celts, Norse Vikings, Saxons, Native American Tribes, the bronze and iron age. Don't expect me to write about the Romans. They do not warm my heart, there is no synergy, and I cannot empathise with them.

I write about nature, wildlife, industrial, social and religious history and architectural structures alongside myths and folklore.

Why not have a go. You may write something and not submit it, but I guarantee you will enjoy drifting through your memories. Here is an idea *'boot sucking ground'*. What did you see, where were you, what else do you remember about that hike? You could send in a photograph with a short paragraph about what you saw and what you remember about the walk.



Do I sit at a computer and write? No, I have a notebook and handwrite because this gives me more connection and ownership, so the words flow more naturally. I let the story rest for a while. I go back to it emending, adding, summarising all by hand. When I feel comfortable, I type it up.

My personal philosophy concerns gratitude. I am grateful for all the experiences and memories SVRC has given me. From gratitude comes giving back and sharing with all Gems readers. I then feel positive and rejuvenated and thankful for those feelings because feeling negative is dull, tedious and not a good place to be.

Have a go – everyone has at least one story, if not a whole book, inside them!

Our lives are like the history of a tree with its life recorded in its growth rings formed by the seasons – in good years a wide ring in bad years a thin ring. Akin to the four seasons and the circle of life writing ensures I have plenty of wide rings that connect my present to my past.

I am able to leave each article as a gift of *thank you*.

**Do you know which Contributor I am yet?**

## Rievaulx Magic

Most walkers going to the North Yorkshire Moors National Park would be more than satisfied just to be dropped off somewhere in this vast area and to take a short or long wander to suit their physical ability. But imagine being able to do that and in addition you can surround yourself with intriguing historical information, beautiful buildings for you to stroll around to imagine and to bring to life the information you have gathered

The next NE Lancs Coach trip in April goes to Rievaulx Abbey which was one of the great abbeys in England. Founded in 1132 by just twelve monks, it was the first Cistercian monastery in the North of England. Based in Helmsley, it's remote location was perfect for prayer and self-sufficiency with little contact with the outside world. William 1 was the first Abbot but it was Saint Aelred of Rievaulx who grew and consolidated the importance of Rievaulx and by 1167 it had 140 monks and 500 lay brothers with 5 daughter houses attached to it in England or Scotland.



Due to its position, in a wooded dale with a meandering river sheltered by hills, the abbey diverted the river at least 3 more times to accommodate their plans for profitable activities in mining both lead and iron, rearing sheep and selling wool to buyers all over Europe. With 6,000 acres It soon became one of the greatest and wealthiest in England.

In the 13th Century all that came to an end at first with debts incurred on its continuing buildings projects and then an epidemic of sheep scab. In the 14th Century raiders coming from Scotland didn't help matters followed by the Black Death affecting the numbers taking them down to 14 monks plus 3 lay brothers together with the abbot. By the 15th Century the strict observance of the original Cistercians to follow the Rule of Saint Benedict was relaxed to allow the eating of meat, a more private living accommodation and the new abbot had a substantial private household established in what was the infirmary.

In 1530, the monks objected to the lavish lifestyle of their leader Edward Cowper. The monks also rejected a replacement.

At the time of the dissolution in 1538, the abbey had 72 buildings, 124 people and an income of £341 per year. They owned a prototype blast furnace producing cast iron as efficient as a modern blast furnace.

In line with other monasteries Rievaulx had to be stripped of all valuables including lead and had to be left uninhabitable. The site was granted to Thomas Manners, 1st Earl of Rutland, who was one of Henry VIII advisers until it passed to the Duncombe family.

In the 16th and 17th Centuries Rievaulx still maintained its iron manufacturing importance. In the 1750's Thomas Duncombe III concentrated on his gardens, creating terraced walks, introduced Grecian style Temples to complement the ruins of Rievaulx Abbey in the valley below.



Although the grounds and temples are in the care of the National Trust, the ruins of Rievaulx Abbey are managed by English Heritage.

Latest projects have included an archaeological survey using low level photography to create a digital surface model together with the plan of the surrounding area so that people can fully understand and appreciate the complete picture that Rievaulx has to offer.

So, what else does this area offer? In addition to the unique history and significance of these buildings, Ryedale the home of Rievaulx offers magnificent, extensive skies, pungent wild garlic deep into the woodlands, meandering rivers that have cut deep valleys into the landscape. Helmsley, the nearest market town, offers a medieval castle, the National Bird of Prey Centre and a walled garden to wander around. There are also many individual tea and cake shops, and pubs with real ale and craft beer.

Come and enjoy the day!

**Glenda B**



## Crime on the Moor

Today, walkers would be attracted to the flat plateau of moorland that sits above Todmorden, Mytholmroyd and Hebden Bridge for its wild, isolated beauty offering that lone experience to the walker. This area of Calderdale offers a “wild walking” experience to all seeking solitude but has many paths crisscrossing the moors and densely wooded hollows giving choice.

Not many people will be aware of the fact that this very area received notoriety in the late 1700’s which was based around the solitary Bell House or Bell House Farm as it is still known today. The activities became so important that the whole moorland area was known as Bell House Moors.

In the 1760’s and for a period of 5yrs, it was referred to by some as a “royal seat”, to others it was a centre of criminal activities that threatened to turn the British economy into crisis.

To all outside appearances, Bell House was just an isolated hand weavers cottage where 3 generations of the Hartley family were barely scrapping a living. But in reality, it was the centre of a counterfeiting network which was led by the eldest Hartley son, David, who had just returned home from Birmingham with a set of newly acquired skills after completing an apprenticeship in iron-working!

The phrase “coining” was making new money from old by shaving or “clipping” off slivers from gold coins, melting them down and making them into new coins. By doing this to 8 coins you would gain an extra one. “King David” became adept at this, and he was so likeable and persuasive that he managed to involve the whole of his community in the enterprise! All were being threatened by mechanisation and this get rich quick scheme developed on their local moor appealed to Yorkshire men. The henchmen collected coins from everyone and always returned with more.

enough was enough! It was brought to the attention of the treasury. An investigator William Deighton was sent to stalk the moor for suspicious activity. Approaches to Bell House were exposed so spying on Bell House itself was impossible. Bribing one of David’s collaborators, resulted in Hartley being arrested while he was drinking in Halifax on 14th October 1769. Three weeks later Deighton was murdered outside of his home in Halifax and before an informant could give any further details on that murder They got away with this because it was expected that soft gold coins usually wore down a little, becoming lighter in weight and the “cut off bits” were struck as Portuguese moldores which were legal tender but more difficult to spot as counterfeit, which was a capital offence at the time.

Eventually after several millions of pounds of fake coins had been pumped into the economy it was estimated that this was 9% of the entire circulation and he was attacked by fellow drinkers in another pub and was burned to death in its fireplace!! 6 months after David Hartley’s arrest he was hung. David’s wife Grace continued to live in Bell House until David’s father died and the family tenure ran out on this notorious family home. She moved across the moor to Lodge Farm paying £560 in cash.

There are a number of options when planning your route around this area, but all will give you the opportunity to experience elements of life during David’s time. The wildness of the natural plant life, the views across the valleys over the individual mill towns, the isolated farmhouses and the wooded dales that you pass through to get from valley to the moortops. Spring Vale will be venturing into this area in June. Why don’t you join us.

**Eleanor**



Clipped 1760 Guinea

## A Walk to the Celtic Wall

One of the classic walks in the Yorkshire Dales is the Stainforth Round over to Feizor from the village of Stainforth. The route sets off from the car park in Stainforth and crosses under the main road via the tunnel by the riverside to reach the road leading down to the pack horse bridge across the River Ribble. A quick look at the falls known as Stainforth Force, before climbing up passed Knights Table Cafe at Little Stainforth. Going straight across the road here the route now steadily climbs around to the right, before entering field paths heading straight for the pass to the left of the prominent summit of Smearsett Scar. Once the ladder stile is reached it is time to deviate from this path and head off to the left across open ground and climb up the hillside adjacent to the wall, as the route levels out look to your right and there standing majestically is the Celtic Wall. The structure is very debatably ancient, but undeniably interesting – it is referred to in Wainwright’s ‘Limestone Country’ book (walk 18) from which these details of size etc. have been taken:

It is a well-built linear limestone wall 65 feet in length, 5 feet in height and 5 feet wide with a smaller fragment just to the east. It is clearly not linked to any of the many existing Enclosure Act field walls in the vicinity, and its construction is quite different, appearing to be far older. There is no obvious agricultural purpose for it, as its orientation would not protect livestock from the prevailing winds.



Wainwright conjectures that it may have been defensive, linked to a possible encampment site just below it in the valley, or alternatively it may be some form of barrow. Neither of these seem at all likely, but what do I know? ‘Thought to be over two thousand years old’ says Wainwright, but there doesn’t seem to be any evidence for this statement.

This wall is not marked on the OS map and is not visible from any of the many footpaths in the vicinity. The best view is from the summit of Smearsett Scar opposite. Many people who regularly walk this area are not aware of it



The route now continues across the top of the fell keeping the valley in view below, it finally descends slowly to the main valley bottom path which leads into Feizor. No visit to Feizor would be justified without a visit to Elaines Tea Rooms and sample a pot of tea and some delicious cakes.

The return trip leaves the tea rooms and heads across the road through the farmyard and along the broad public bridleway that climbs up the valley in an area known as Feizor Thwaite. Keeping to the left hand path the route finally reaches the summit where the left hand path is again followed dropping down the hillside and the across lower level pastures to reach Little Stainforth. The route now retraces the outward journey back into Stainforth.



Michael C