

Ramblers Gems



A Spring Vale Rambling Class Publication

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The River Ribble

Deep in the heart of the Yorkshire Dales, a trickle of water emerges from a tiny wall of limestone, creates a soggy patch of grass and moss, disappears for a while until finally to emerges forming a recognisable stream. This is Jam Sike but could equally be Long Gill or Shivery Gill for the exact source of the River Ribble is difficult to pinpoint in this wild expanse of Gayle Moor high up above Ribblesdale. The Ribble is the only river rising in Yorkshire flowing westward passing through Settle, Clitheroe, Ribchester and Preston, before emptying into the Irish Sea between St Annes and Southport.

The river flows through some of the finest landscapes in the north of England, from the austere heights of the Yorkshire's Three Peaks, Ingleborough, Pen-y-ghent and Whernside, through the lush green Ribble Valley overlooked by the mighty Pendle Hill and on to the estuary, renowned for the important wildlife habitats.

The full extent of the Ribble area is great for walking, three long distant footpaths, the Pennine Way, the Dales Way and the Ribble Way pass close by. The Yorkshire Three Peaks offers the walker the ultimate of challenges, by climbing all the three peaks within a twelve-hour period. Spring Vale Ramblers will be undertaking just one, Whernside on the 14th May, a strenuous walk at a much more leisurely pace.

Once the hills around Settle are left behind, the valley opens up with the fells of the Forest of Bowland appearing to the west and Pendle Hill already starting to dominate the landscape to the south. The meandering river frequently floods the fields by Long Preston.

As the river now turns to the west and enters Lancashire the name of the valley changes from Ribblesdale to the Ribble Valley and the landscape becomes rolling green countryside as it passes villages such as Bolton by Bowland, Grindleton and Waddington. History is all around now with the ruins at Sawley Abbey, the towering walls of Clitheroe Castle and the even older Roman fort at Ribchester.

The new city of Preston barely notices the river as it slips silently by on its southern outskirts, passing through the parkland of Avenham and Miller Park.

The last few miles the Ribble flows through the flat landscape of salt marshes, draining channels and reclaimed land until it finally reaches the Irish Sea. The river has been on a 70 mile journey from source to sea and at every twist and turn provides opportunities for the walker to explore the surrounding countryside on foot.

Glenda B

The Blue Carpet

While walking in most woodland it will soon be time to have that glorious experience of bluebells and fading daffodils. The ground is a mixture of soggy grass or muddy paths, then after a few dry days the paths dry out and show green shoots appearing on all sides.

Looking up gives a glimpse of what is to come, branch upon branch of buds on naked trees. you just know that in a short while the green canopy will fill the void and sunlight will only have room to filter down on the ground below. Looking further off you can see a carpet of developing bluebells with a few daffodils joining into the mix. Very soon the eye will be drawn to the wonderful blue carpet. Heads hanging low or standing to attention depending on the weather.

Over the years the Bluebell has had several names, Cuckoo's Boots, Witches' Thimble and have had quite a varied use in passed centuries. The bulbs having a starchy consistency have been used to stiffen Tudor ruffs, to kill silverfish (the book binders answer to a prayer), for treating Leprosy and to stick feathers to arrows. (Bronze age).

Bluebells, being early to bloom are a very good friend to the honeybee. In 1981 it became an offence to pick these precious flowers and you can get landed with a heavy fine if caught picking the bulbs.

If you keep your eyes open when just walking the streets, you will find some gardens containing bluebells, but don't get confused for these are likely to be the imported Spanish Bluebell which is less tolerant in shaded areas.

Enjoy your walks.



Maggie

The Skylark

by John Clare

The rolls and harrows lie at rest beside
The battered road; and spreading far and wide
Above the russet clods, the corn is seen
Sprouting its spiry points of tender green,
Where squats the hare, to terrors wide awake,
Like some brown clod the harrows failed to break.
Opening their golden caskets to the sun,
The buttercups make schoolboys eager run,
To see who shall be first to pluck the prize—
Up from their hurry, see, the skylark flies,
And o'er her half-formed nest, with happy wings
Winnows the air, till in the cloud she sings,
Then hangs a dust-spot in the sunny skies,
And drops, and drops, till in her nest she lies,
Which they unheeded passed—not dreaming then
That birds which flew so high would drop agen
To nests upon the ground, which anything
May come at to destroy. Had they the wing
Like such a bird, themselves would be too proud,
And build on nothing but a passing cloud!
As free from danger as the heavens are free
From pain and toil, there would they build and be,
And sail about the world to scenes unheard
Of and unseen—Oh, were they but a bird!
So think they, while they listen to its song,
And smile and fancy and so pass along;
While its low nest, moist with the dews of morn,
Lies safely, with the leveret, in the corn.



Pesto Cenorr

The Big Adventure

Spring Vale Ramblers are off on an adventure on Saturday 3rd April that is surely a first for us. As part of the celebrations for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee we are going caving. To be exact we are going on a guided tour of Ingleborough Cave and then completing a short walk taking in Gapping Gill and onto the shoulder of Ingleborough.

Ingleborough Cave is one of three show caves in the Yorkshire Dales; the others being White Scar Cave and Stump Cross Caverns. It is reached by a lovely walk along a nature trail starting from the village of Clapham. The cave has been a visitor attraction since 1837. The imposing entrance to Ingleborough Cave has always been an obvious feature, however the secrets of the Cave were hidden behind large natural calcite dams behind which water had ponded, submerging much of the immediate passage beyond.

After a severe flood, it was clear that large passages had to exist behind these dams. A local landowner James Farrer set workmen on to break down the dams, releasing the trapped water, and revealing a wonderland of sculpted passages and beautiful cave formations which have delighted visitors ever since.



The Cave was once the outflow for the streams that flow through the world-famous 17 km Gapping Gill cave system, but these streams are running at a lower level allowing the original passages to be safely explored by visitors.

On certain days in the year, it is possible to ascend down from the top of Gapping Gill into the cathedral sized cavern below. This adventure is not for the faint hearted and is not currently on our list of adventures.

A well-laid concrete path allows you to traverse comfortably for over half a kilometre into the mountain, and discrete lighting displays the calcite flows, the stalactites, and the stalagmites at their very best. This really is one of the country's natural wonders. Our tour of the system will be undertaken with the help of an expert guide who will explain the many features to be found below ground.



At the end of the tourist path the cave passage is seen disappearing into the distance on its way to Gapping Gill, which itself wasn't fully descended until 1895 when French speleologist Edouard Alfred Martel was able to lower himself down by rope ladder using only a candle for illumination.

Eventually, after many years of exploration, the connection was finally made between Ingleborough Cave and Gapping Gill by teams of cavers from the Bradford Pothole Club and Cave Diving Group in 1983. Even after all this time, explorations in the far extremities of the system continue to unravel the secrets of this hidden world. In fact, cavers unearthed remains of a woolly rhinoceros from just beyond the end of the path as recently as 2001!

Our party should have no fears as we will only be experiencing the section of the system that is open to the public.

The Surrounding Area

After our caving adventure we will go on a short walk to explore the wonderful natural wonders of the surrounding area. These include The Craven Fault System, a classic limestone dry valley, Trow Gill Gorge, Gapping Gill and lots of limestone pavements.

No doubt in a future edition we will highlight some of the photos from this great adventure.

Michael C

April Fools

At this time of year people's attention is usually drawn to the weather or to Mother Nature with the splash of colours or the wonderful smells of spring. The last thing you might think of is April 1st or April Fools Day. What is this, where did it come from and are there really good examples of what's happened in the past but how can I stop myself from being "got" or thought of as an April Fool!!

It is thought that it dates to 1582 when France moved from the Julian calendar to the Gregorian calendar. The Julian calendar just like the Hindu calendar, celebrated the new year at the time of the Spring Equinox April 1st. The Gregorian calendar now recognised January 1st as this important time so anyone who was slow to realise this was known as an April fool and as a paper fish was "placed" on his back was known as a "poisson d'Avril" to reflect a young, gullible fish.

In the Northern Hemisphere it was thought that Mother Nature might play a trick on people with unpredictable weather on this day. In Scotland in the 18th Century, it became a two day event with the first day people being sent out to find the cuckoo bird and day 2 or "Tailie" day where people tried to fix a tail or a "kick me" sign on an individual's derriere as a joke.

Newspapers, TV and websites go to great lengths to fool people these days. The famous Swiss spaghetti bumper crop harvest with farmers collecting the crop from trees will be remembered forever.



In 1856 an official invite went out to London residents on official Tower of London headed notepaper with a wax seal regarding an event that would include washing lions at the Tower of London on April 1st and lots of people did turn up to view this spectacle. Oops! The Tower had not had animals for 2 decades. April Fool.

In 1998 the fast-food chain Burger King had advertised a "left handed Whopper" and reported that lots of people had gone in ordering the sandwich.

April Fools Day is not just providing antics for the British sense of humour.

In 1962, the Swedish one and only TV channel at the time announced that if viewers took a pair of stockings, stretched them out over the TV and taped them in place, they would see the normal black and white images in colour! After rushing to implement this "trick" viewers were disappointed to realise that it just obscured the picture, and it would take a further 8 years before colour appeared on Swedish TV's.



Quite often on this day there are examples of the Loch Ness Monster related events but in 1972 a prank backfired. Nessy had been spotted but a worker from Flamingo Park Yorkshire had taken a dead bull seal and placed it in Loch Ness intending to play a trick on colleagues but unfortunately it went viral! Photographs appeared in the national and international press.

One of the most memorable tricks was undertaken by the BBC and Patrick Moore in 1976 when he said that at 9:47 the alignment of Pluto and Jupiter would mean that there would be a reduction in Earth's gravity allowing people to be able to briefly levitate. At 9:48 the switchboard was flooded with calls from viewers claiming that they had floated in the air!!

So whatever you are doing on April 1st, just think before you believe anything you are told, but only until 12:00 the deadline or the person playing the trick will be known as the fool themselves!



Eleanor

Collective Birds

R B Q B J C H I M E E N B N E
 Z Z T K B L Q H C H D E Y E H
 Y A A G S P C Z E W G N N I J
 S C O L D C O N S P I R A C Y
 H S H M I S C H I E F T W Z P
 A E Z O A M T Z J G B B E K W
 O B X W C L R R H W A D B K A
 F W M U C U R F E W W L D E K
 D R S K L F O I N M L R D T E
 U F B B A T O N S N B Y T T E
 J I K O S C A B L C B L G L R
 F F G O Y R J T N Z G Q I E M
 E M R B L O O D I B W C F N A
 E J F Y U W V O O X I R U G
 H X K I M N Q Y Q F N X B I Y

Fill in the collective nouns below and then find the words in the grid above.

e.g. A *hedge* of herons.

1. A _____ of kingfishers.	7. A _____ of finches.
2. An _____ of skylarks.	8. A _____ of swallows.
3. An _____ of cuckoos.	9. A _____ of jays.
4. A _____ of curlews.	10. A _____ of wrens.
5. A _____ of nuthatches.	11. A _____ of ravens.
6. A _____ of magpies.	12. A _____ of buzzards.

Coming soon – Articles on ‘*The Meanings of Birds*’ and their symbolism starting with the *kingfisher*.

Birds are widely regarded as **symbols of freedom and eternity** due to their ability to soar into the skies. Bird symbolism exists all over the world as part of different cultures, religions, and traditions. Every bird is uniquely breath-taking and symbolises certain aspects of our lives, nature, and the unknown world.

Jean G