

Ramblers Gems



A Spring Vale Rambling Class Publication

Volume 3 Issue 18

6th May 2022

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

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 **A Carpet of Blue**
- 2 **Lichens, Mosses and Liverworts**
- 3 **A Walk from Source to Sea
When Cotton was King**
- 4 **The Cuerdale Hoard**
- 5 **Wrong doings in the Dales**

A Carpet of Blue

It is at this time of year that you need to get out and about and visit a bluebell wood. It is at springtime that certain woodlands have a carpet of flowering bluebells (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) underneath a newly forming leaf canopy. The thicker the summer canopy, the more the competitive groundcover is suppressed, encouraging a dense carpet of bluebells. After putting on a magnificent display the leaves mature and die down by early summer. Other common woodland plants which accompany bluebells include the yellow rattle and the wood anemone. Bluebells only flower between **mid-April and late May**.

This early flowering plant makes the most of the sunlight that reaches the woodland floor before the full woodland canopy casts its shade. Millions of bulbs grow close together within the wood, creating one of nature's most stunning displays.



Almost half the world's population of bluebells grow here in the UK's broadleaved woodland. They can appear along hedgerows and in fields, but it is in the woodland that the display is most stunning. Bees, hoverflies, butterflies, and other insects feed on the nectar of bluebells. Their flowers provide an important early source of nectar. Bees are able to steal the nectar from bluebell flowers by biting a hole in the bottom of the bell and reaching the nectar without pollinating the flower.



These photographs were taken in the Brock Valley near to Garstang.

Michael C

Lichens, Mosses and Liverworts

Glacial erratics stud much of our landscape. Erratics are boulders scraped from the valley sides by moving ice and dumped at a new location – most notable limestone pavements and benches. Limestone resting on limestone is an awesome sight. When the deposited rock is not limestone the contrasting hues between the rocks is stark and makes for a great photograph. Gritstone resting on limestone adds interest to a moon-like wasteland of bare rock. They have remained in place for thousands of years whilst forests have come and gone and water has ebbed and flowed.

But, can anything grow on them?

Lichens pronounced "likens" have no roots, leaves or flowers. They are a basic life form like dust lodged in tiny pits and fissures a pinprick deep. Over centuries rocks become glazed with the grey-green crust of lichen. They create subtle details adding colour and intrigue. You will walk past them without acknowledgement or recognition. They anchor tightly to rock via a short stalk at the centre. They are not a plant. A lichen is not one thing but two – a fungus and an alga growing on rocks, walls and trees making the most beautiful natural patterns. They can appear grey or pale white in colour and look disc-like. They are an important part of nature. They currently provide us with dyes for wool and fabric and scents for perfumes. They provide shelter for other organisms. They also provide food for animals and materials that they can use to build their homes or nests.

Lichens
on stone



Mosses on the other hand are bright green, grow in moist dark areas and have small leaf-like structures and stems but no flowers. They grow in tufts and mats and they produce spores. Often overlooked, these tiny plants have incredible properties.

From hot deserts to damp caves, mosses can survive in extreme conditions and play an important role in biodiverse habitats. They help to soak up rainfall, maintain moisture in the soil below and keep conditions around them humid. This enables other plants around them to thrive, such as in habitats like marshes and woodland. Sphagnum moss, due to its spongy consistency, soaks up and holds moisture. Just squeezing it will provide a water source – and due to its acidic nature, bacteria typically aren't present. Moss is used as bedding for animals, particularly horses. Dried or dead moss is extremely flammable so you can make a cosy bonfire out of moss as a fire-starter? It is an ideal, natural wound dressing, as well as treatment for rashes. Handy if you find yourself injured or lost in the woods! Due to its dense and tight root system, it has fantastic insulation properties, keeping your house cool in the summer and warm in the winter. Should you find yourself lost in the woods a moss blanket might come in handy!

Swans neck thyme moss



Liverworts are the next group. They are small flowerless green plants with leaf-like stems or lobed leaves and grow in most habitats. Liverworts lack true roots and reproduce by means of spores released from capsules. In ancient times it was believed that diseases of the liver could be cured by these plants.

The world of mosses, lichens and liverworts is one of exceptional loveliness and diversity. They thrive in unlikely places like tree trunks, rock shelves and historic structures.

Contrary to popular belief, lichens, mosses, and liverworts do not damage what they are growing on but can be slippery when wet so please take care when you are out walking.

Liverworts



Jean G

Walk from Source to Sea

The Spring Vale Ramble walk on Good Friday followed the Ribble Way for the last mile or so. The Ribble Way was the brainchild of the Preston and Fylde group of Ramblers Association back in 1967. The idea was to establish a national trail following the course of the river wherever public footpaths allowed or seeking to establish new permissive paths with landowners.

The original thought was that because they are a Lancashire group the preliminary plan would be a designate the trail running from river mouth at Longton to Payphone near to the border with Yorkshire. It was later decided that Gisburn would be a better termination point

Progress slow for many years and it wasn't until the mid-80s that the Lancashire section of the Ribble Way was opened. The opening ceremony came to the attention of the North Yorkshire County Council and the Yorkshire Dales National Park, who were quite interested in extending the project into their own area. This would involve lengthening the route to the rivers source or as close as it was possible using public footpaths. Everyone thought that this would be a good idea.

However there then comes the very thorny issue which has caused controversy and sometimes bitter arguments in some parts of the world (most notably in the search for the source of the Nile). Everybody involved with the Ribble Way project had their own idea of the source of the Ribble. Some geographers maintained that the river's source should be its remotest point from the sea: while others maintained that a rivers source must be its highest point above sea level. In truth a river source is rarely straight forward - which tributed is the most important? While some have nominated 2 springs on Wold Fell as the source, others suggested a spring on Cam Fell.

As far as the Ribble Way is concerned such questions are academic. The question is which of the contenders is accessible by public footpath? Only one candidate fits this bill - the spring at the head of Jam Sike on Gayle Wold. It is also higher above sea level than the springs on either Wold Fell or Cam Fell.

Tony C

When Cotton was King

Queen Street Mill in Harle Syke is the last surviving 19th century steam powered weaving mill in the world. It is now a Grade 1 listed building and relives the days when cotton was king.

Queen Street Mill is a nostalgic time capsule of the late Victorian age bringing the textile industry vividly to life. Set amongst an iconic, distinctive industrial landscape shaped by chimneys, old mills and terraced house, it offers a truly unique experience.

Imagine what life would have been like as a mill worker. You might even hear the sounds of 'Peace' the incredible steam-powered engine that powers over 300 looms in the weaving shed. It is possible to visit the weaving shed and feel and hear the power of the looms and understand why the weavers had to learn to lip read. Hollywood descended on Harle Syke when the mill scenes from the Oscar winning film *The King's Speech* were shot on location here.



Peace is a 500hp tandem compound engine, built in 1894 to run this medium sized weaving shed. By utilising steam from the mill's twin coal fired Lancashire boilers, the engine originally powered over 900 looms and ancillary machinery in processes like weaving, winding, beaming, taping and plaiting.



The Mill is open Wednesday to Sunday 10 am to 4 pm
The admission charge is only £3 and children go free.

Eleanor

The Cuerdale Hoard

Imagine the scene, sometime at the start of the 10th century a bunch of Vikings were rowing up the River Ribble. They had probably travelled over the Irish Sea making their way to the Viking administrative capital at York. On board their vessel was an enormous silver treasure chest. For some unknown reason the Vikings decided to stop, dig a hole and bury their swag. None of them ever came back to collect it.

In 1840, the hoard was discovered by a gang of workmen repairing the banking by the side of the River Ribble, near to Cuerdale Hall. Some attempt was made by the workmen to fill their pockets with coins from the find but following the intervention of the landowner's bailiff they were allowed to keep one piece each while the rest was taken to Cuerdale Hall where the trove covered a sitting room floor. It was the largest Viking hoard ever found in Western Europe.

The hoard was made up of 8,500 items mainly coins from Viking controlled territory. The other items were ingots with cut up broaches, chains and rings known as "hack silver". From the dates on the coins historians can tie down the burial of the hoard to a five year period between 905 and 910. Much of the hack silver has been identified as being of Irish origin giving rise to speculation as to whether there was a connection with the Viking expulsion from Dublin in 902. The Ribble would have been a natural highway between Dublin and the great Viking centre of York (Jorvick). Were these Vikings on their way to assist some warlord in the north east of England?



A small selection of silver from the Cuerdale Hoard



Silver coins from the Hoard

Marauding Vikings fit into the popular notion of the Viking Age when the constant prayer was "From the fury of the Northmen deliver us O Lord." Yet the discovery of the hoard gives another picture – one which reflects the wide international connects the Vikings had across the known world in all likelihood made not by conquest but peaceful trade. The non-Viking coins originated from the English (Anglo Saxon) Kingdoms, the Continent, Byzantium and areas of Moslem influence in the Middle East and beyond.

The Cuerdale Hoard is a national treasure and most of it is exhibited at the British Museum. However, there are some items displayed at the Harris Museum Preston, the Lancashire Museum and the South Ribble Museum.

The site where the hoard was discovered can be found by following the riverside footpath out from Walton Le Dale in the direction of Cuerdale Hall. There is a stone engraved marker which indicates the spot, and this is a notable point of interest if you are ever walking in this area.



Engraved stone marker

Michael C

Wrong doings in the Dales

The members of Spring Vale Rambling Class are used to visiting beautiful villages and countryside but may not be aware of the dark and true stories that these very same places may be hiding. Take for instance Skipton. It was in March 1932 when the area was experiencing hard times. It was lambing time and the new Import Duties Act added 10% or more at the shops.

Joseph Swaine 62, a popular Otley farmer, was renting a farmhouse and land near the golf course and was planning to marry a local girl Gwendolen Forrest 25, after courting for several years. They shared an early evening meal before Joseph set off on the bus to call on a friend in Addingham before travelling together to the auction mart at Skipton the next day.



Farmers reported talking to him during the day, but he vanished between 2:45 and 3:30pm after going into the mens' toilets. 3 men were reported hanging about near the toilets, but Joseph was not seen leaving. Gwendolen did not report Joseph's disappearance to the police.

Next morning a cleaner entered the toilets. The floor was wet and muddy, but it had been raining heavily. Then he noticed a pair of dirty false teeth on the window ledge and also a stream of blood coming from under the door. He found it hard to open as Joseph's body was blocking the entrance. Still alive, the cleaner brought the police and doctor, but it was too late for poor Joseph who died shortly afterwards. Joseph was identified and Detective Superintendent Blacker and Superintendent Hodgson from Otley took charge. They thought Joseph had been hit on the right side of his head which sent his false teeth across the room before dragging him into a cubicle, locking the door before climbing over it. Joseph's body had lain there for 18 hours.

Blood was everywhere but there was no wallet although his watch had not been removed. A reward of £100 (£7,000 today) was offered for information but animal auctions were well known for pickpockets, tricksters and welshers. Similar meeting places were visited by the police and allotments were searched for a murder weapon. Although people had noticed blood on the lavatory floor, nobody had reported it. The crime had taken place in full flow of the cattle sales with hundreds of farmers and breeders present. Police suspected more than one person.

The search was widened and blood-stained clothing was found at Horton in Ribblesdale. Bloodhounds were used but the clothing proved unrelated. A description of three men was released and a pursuit involving Hawes, Ulverston and Barnard Castle was undertaken but all investigations led to nothing.

Two weeks later a John Blanchfield came forward and said that a man, Thomas Gaunt, had boasted using a crowbar on the Skipton murder. Gaunt, an unemployed miner from Derbyshire who had been travelling around the Dales, became erratic and refused to reveal his partner's name. He was an unbalanced and highly volatile individual and following a medical examination, he was certifiable under the Lunacy Act. Several violent events or apoplexy, caused by a stroke or haemorrhage, had left him confused regarding reality or "dreams". He had bought rat poison with the intention of killing himself.

Despite Gaunt's admission of guilt, the police were not able to prove his movements on the day of the murder and there was no weapon or fingerprints. Gaunt was discharged into the care of staff at a huge "Mental Asylum" at the time. Joseph was buried at Otley Parish Church with many mourners in attendance.



Otley Parish Church

Next time you are in Skipton or Otley spare a minute for Joseph Swaine who died for no obvious reason.

Glenda B