

Ramblers Gems



A Spring Vale Rambling Class Publication

Volume 3 Issue 2

14th January 2022

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Weather - Old Wives' Tales

We have had some pretty foul weather recently and our weather is renowned for being unpredictable but there are ways that nature can help to give us an indication that the rain is on its way.

In the past, man relied solely on his observation of the sky and the way plants and animals behaved to predict the weather. Accumulated experience was handed down in rhyme or linked to certain dates in the calendar and became the subject of many old wives' tales.

There were many parts of nature that were used to foretell the weather – some more bizarre than others. Seaweed and pinecones were traditionally used due to the reactive nature of them. But while a piece of seaweed might well become slimy when humidity is high, an open pinecone, despite popular opinion, is not a reliable indicator of dry weather.

Weather lore for walkers

Red sky at night shepherds delight, Red sky in morning shepherds warning. This is because rainstorms blow in from the west generated in the Atlantic Ocean.

'A fly on your nose, you slap and it goes, if it comes back again it will bring a good rain'

Insects are susceptible to humidity and will settle as a rain belt approaches. The same rationale can be applied to the saying
'when cows slap their sides with their tails it is a sign of rain' as cattle and horses are greatly annoyed by flies during humid weather.

Generally, most of us rely on forecasts to tell us what kind of weather to expect. However, it is possible to predict the weather using your skills of observation and knowledge of weather patterns.

Four signs of imminent rain

You know you're going it's going to rain when
.....*pine needles become pliable.* This means that they are absorbing moisture.

.....*birds are hanging around near the ground.* The low air pressure of a storm keeps insects low consequently the birds feed close to the ground.

.....*cows are laying down.* They can sense it's going to rain due to electricity in the air so they are getting a dry patch while they can.

.....*you notice the smell of rain.* this is because wet air transmits smells of tree and soil oils more strongly when humidity is high.

Of course, we know now that this was not a reliable way to generate a weather forecast, but it is fun.

Eleanor

A Good Month To: -

According to Country Walking magazine January is a good month to:

Pledge to walk 1000 miles
Find a sea snail
Forage for chestnuts
Nibble on raw beech nuts
Read a classic of nature writing
Walk from dawn till dusk - (often unintentionally) - *I added that bit JC*

February will be a good month to:

See wildlife in urban areas
Scatter food for birds
Make a snow angel
Climb to your county highest point
Hear a woodpecker
See a white mountain hare
Make nettle tea
Buy a head torch
Jane C

Be one in a million!

Last year more than one million people took part in Big Garden Birdwatch, all coming together to look out for birds. Why not join in and be one in a million for 2022?

It is a fact that we've lost 38 million birds from UK skies in the last 50 years, so it really is vital we do all we can to look after our birdlife.

The conservation charity RSPB depends on everyone's support to save nature and to look after places where wildlife can thrive. By taking part in Big Garden Birdwatch, you can also make a difference. Wherever you are, whatever you see, it counts! The Big Garden Birdwatch takes place for one hour over the weekend of the 28th and 30th January.

We enjoy spotting and watching birds while we are out and about, whether this is in our garden, local park or on one of our walks. Taking part in this annual event means recording the total number of different species seen over a one-hour period. Now that can't be that hard. So go on get involved.

Michael C

An Eagle Spotted

Springvale Rambling Class often walk in the Cadshaw valley area, south of Bull Hill, and a recent story in the Lancashire Telegraph was quite interesting. It was in the weekly section called "Looking back" which retells stories from past editions. This article, which I don't remember, goes back to the autumn of 1983 and involves a bird watcher spotting and photographing a Golden Eagle at Cadshaw.

The tail pattern suggests that it was a juvenile, possibly raised by the pair resident in the Lake District, which was the closest breeding pair in Lancashire. Indeed, the pair which were resident at Hawswater in the Lake District from 1986 until the late 1990s was the only breeding pair outside of Scotland. It is very rare to see this magnificent bird in Lancashire although the odd bird is sometimes spotted in the Forest of Bowland on their way north.

Golden Eagle



Another British bird of prey is the Buzzard, which in Scotland is often referred to as the 'tourist eagle'. Many visitors returning from Scotland think they have spotted an eagle, when what they really have seen is a buzzard. Buzzards do glide like eagles, but when you see them together, the huge form of the eagle stands out, their massive wings have been described as like a flying barn door. Of course, buzzards are now becoming a common sight everywhere, including around the Darwen, so as they become more commonplace and recognisable then they should become less confused with a much larger eagle.

Buzzard



Tony C

Wildflowers of the UK

Month-by-Month

This is a guide that will cover the more common wildflowers that can be found in the areas where SVRC walk, so that when you are out and about you will have a quick reference guide. During the autumn and winter our countryside changes and there are very few flowers out on view as they are dormant underground during the colder weather.

Can you name these in our New Year Quiz? Who will be the first to spot and photograph them before the end of the current 2021-2022 walks programme in March? Upload your photographs to our Facebook page with a comment on where you found them and the date.

December

1. Seeds for birds. Probably best-known for its brown, prickly stems and conical seed heads, which persist long after the plants themselves have died back for the winter.



2. Can be seen in all kinds of habitats, from heaths and coastal grasslands to towns and gardens. It generally flowers from January to

January

3. Single bulbs not yet in flower! A familiar spring flower, coming into bloom in January and flowering until March. Despite its long history in the UK, however, it may not actually be native here; it is a native



of damp woods and meadows on the continent but was not recorded as growing wild in the UK until the late 18th century.

February

4. Charming and cheerful, the star-shaped flowers of this plant brighten up the woodland floor. Look out for their friendly yellow flowers on path edges in early spring.



A good source of early pollen and nectar for pollinating insects. Dark green, shiny and fleshy heart shaped leaves that can have white markings.



5. A common and creeping perennial of bare, damp or disturbed ground. This plant can be found on waste ground, field edges and roadside verges. Sun-yellow, daisy-like, composite flower heads appear as early as February, and well before the hoof-shaped leaves (hence the common name).

Barbara S

Mistletoe

by Walter de la Mare

Sitting under the mistletoe
(Pale-green, fairy mistletoe),
One last candle burning low,
All the sleepy dancers gone,
Just one candle burning on,
Shadows lurking everywhere:
Some one came, and kissed me there.

Tired I was; my head would go
Nodding under the mistletoe
(Pale-green, fairy mistletoe),
No footsteps came, no voice, but only,
Just as I sat there, sleepy, lonely,
Stooped in the still and shadowy air
Lips unseen—and kissed me there.

Submitted Pesto Cenorr

St Helens Church Waddington

Over the years Spring Vale Ramblers have started and finished a ramble in the picturesque Ribble Valley village of Waddington. Dominating the village is the Church of Saint Helen, the tower being clearly visible from all approaches. It was built over four hundred years ago in the local grey stone quarried from Waddington Fell. We may visit the pub or the café, but seldom do we take the time to stroll around this old village or even venture into the old parish church.



St Helens Church Waddington

Further information about Waddington is contained in the following extract from *The Rambler, a Record of a Ramble, Historical Facts, Legends*, 1905, by J.T. Fielding:

"Then we pass into the open air and proceed with our perambulations of the village of Waddington.

The village of Waddington is named after the great chief, Wada, who was a hero in Saxon times. Report saith that he was one of the combatants against Eardulph, King of Northumbria, in the Battle of Lango, in the year 798, and that he there suffered a great defeat, and immense numbers were slain on both sides. There is no doubt that a terrible battle was fought around Brockhall Farm, near Hacking Boat, as many remains have been unearthed, pointing to such conclusion.

It would be a gross mistake to visit Waddington, and omit the church. The tower, with the exception of a small portion at the opposite end adjoining the river, is the only old portion standing. From all data at hand, the old church appears to have been erected in the reign of Henry VIII. The other portions have lately been completely rebuilt and fitted with modern conveniences. Dedicated to St. Helen, the popular English saint, it bears the same name of dedication that may be observed in sixty or seventy other churches throughout the country.

Tradition would, no doubt, trace her popularity to the fact that she was a British princess. She was the mother of Constantine the Great, who was born at York, and accepted the Christian religion. Her memory is preserved in the stained window in the church tower. The tit-bit of the church however, lies in the tower window. The whole history of Waddington shines in the streaks of coloured light that filters through this aperture. The beautiful piece of workmanship was presented to the church by J. Waddington Esq, the aforesaid owner of the adjacent hall. Its three panels bear record as follow: The centre one depicts the Patron Saint of the church, St. Helen. On the right, woven in the most fascinating blend of colour, the observer beholds a very suggestive picture of Henry VI. with his crown in his hand, ready to give it up at the calls of his victors. The panel to the left sets forth a warlike figure of Wada, the leader, A.D. 798. He is pictured in full war paint and carries all weapons of his day. Stern of countenance, and strong of limb, the characteristics of a warrior bold have been forcefully portrayed in this splendid glassy memorial tablet."



The Stain Glass Windows



King Henry VI

Michael C

My Favourite Walks

When walkers are asked the question “which is your favourite walk?” they start to go into great detail about the start point, go down the lane to your left, when you reach the end of that lane go through a gate before following a beech hedge on your left for 300yards. Really, the person asking the question may be more impressed by you being able to recall what made it memorable for you, did anything happen to make it different from any other walk and more importantly why did you enjoy it? I will outline my three walks and why they are the ones that still stick in my memory even after 40 years of walking.

Eglwyseg

This particular walk takes you down the Eglwyseg Valley near Llangollen in Wales. After leaving the busy tourist town behind with its tumbling river, steaming trains and plenty of tea shops you follow the canal and field paths to Valle Crucis Abbey following woodland tracks and quiet lanes to reach World’s End. The limestone escarpment with towering cliffs surrounds you on all sides making you feel that you have stepped back in time with its solitude and stark beauty.

The return journey takes you on the Offa’s Dyke path with its limestone scree to Castell Dinas Bran, a ruined Welsh castle, before dropping down back again into Llangollen. But the most memorable event of this walk is going with my 5 year old nephew who placed his head through a set of iron railings on the bridge over the River Dee and got it stuck! It took quite a bit of us calming him down before we could remove him without the use of the fire service!



The Eglwyseg Escarpment

Tissington

The Derbyshire Dales are very well known for their walking or cycling routes which have been established on disused railway lines, such as the Monsal and Tissington Trail. The local villages are also renowned for the annual traditional events of well dressing. Selecting a route on a Trail always gives you a flat walk with the many fine views on offer, together with interesting historic information relating to the railway activities when the lines were at their height of use as the main way of travel.

I remember distinctly a walk with the Spring Vale Rambling Class that coincided with the Tissington well dressing event that allowed me to see the 5 wells that were on display. Coffin Well, Town Well, Hall Well, Children’s Well and the Hands Well. This tradition originated as part of pagan practice in which water sources were decorated with flower petal designs, to give thanks for a reliable supply of water. The display normally takes a biblical scene, a fairy tale or a current topic as its theme, giving the opportunity for the whole village to work together on its building and display. This follows the old way of working on craft projects where the important element is the opportunity for villagers to just chat while creating their piece of artwork. As usual, this walk ended with a wonderful cuppa served in nice china cups, accompanied by a choice of Ashbourne gingerbread men, Bakewell tart or Derbyshire oatcake with Sage Derby cheese. Yummy!

Littondale

One walk that involved a group of Spring Vale Ramblers on a day between Xmas and New Year a few years ago saw us setting off from Arncliffe better known from the soap Emmerdale or the recent series of All Creatures Great and Small. Heading in a northerly direction we followed the side of the River Skirfare and we had several small streams to jump with the younger members of our group enjoying every minute. Litton, our half way point, of course involved a pint and a sandwich at the local hostelry. The most memorable event on that walk was when one of our youngest members who had complained of wet feet, had his wellies emptied only to find them full to the brim with water. We had to quickly dry his socks on the fireplace but that just meant two pints instead of the one to allow this to happen!!

What are your best walking recollections?

Glenda B