

# Ramblers Gems



A Spring Vale Rambling Class Publication

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## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 Owls of Delight**
- 2 Plant ID – the results are in!**
- 3 Butterfly Conservation /  
The Boot on the Other Foot**
- 4 Heritage and Town Trails**
- 5 A Magic Cure?**

## Owls of Delight

We often walk our dogs in the Tockholes area and on several evenings recently we have spotted a pair of Barn Owls carrying rodents in their talons. They entered to the rear of Fine Peters farm at Tockholes at the end of Dean Lane and were obviously nesting in one of the outbuildings.

With a shaped face, buff coloured back and wings and pure white underparts, the Barn Owl is a distinctive and much-loved countryside bird. The Barn Owl has been through tough times recently and has declined in some areas where they were once more common. In the main this is due to a loss of suitable nesting locations or being adversely affected by pesticides such as DDT in the 1950s and '60s. They get their name from their preference to nest in barns and other outbuildings, although church towers and hollow trees are also used when available. They have been recorded laying eggs in every month of the year, except January, but usually laying four or six eggs in April or early May, when food is more abundant often having two broods which will fledge after about 12 weeks.

There are many myths and legends associated with the owl. It was once believed that eating the heart of an owl would cure blindness, based presumably on the owls well known keen eyesight. In British folklore, a screeching Barn Owl is believed to predict that a storm or cold weather was imminent. During a storm, if a Barn Owl was heard, it indicated that the storm was nearly over. There is a custom found in parts of Yorkshire of giving owl broth as a cure for whooping cough, and, as an owl is known to hoot or whoop without getting ill, then a broth made from the bird this should cure whooping cough.

The ancient Greeks worship a god who sometimes took the form of a bird known as Pallas Athene, the patroness of Athens and goddess of war, and was said to appear as an owl. This probably gave rise to the modern expression “as wise as an owl” for she was like the goddess of wisdom. Barn Owls often appears ghostly white when caught in car headlights and they are indeed white coloured when seen in daylight. When first spotted barn owls can easily be mistaken for a gull in flight, but barn owl wings are much wider than a gulls. Although associated with the night time they can often be spotted at dawn and early evenings during the summer months when out foraging for a meal.



Tony C

## Plant ID – the results are in!

In a previous article I wrote about having an App on my phone so I could quickly identify a plant. There is not much time when you are on a ramble, pioneering a walk or doing a site check before a Canal & River Trust Volunteer Taskforce session.

I had three Apps in mind. My first trial was [Pl@ntNet \(iOS\)](#). This is an application that allows you to identify plants simply by photographing them with your smartphone.



So, using several plants and shrubs I can distinguish in my garden as a benchmark, I photographed them so I could evaluate the accuracy, ease of use and speed of the application. The results were 100% accurate and also gave other alternative suggestions/variations of the plant family i.e. viburnum opus and viburnum tinus.

Then I went to check some issues on two stretches of towpath. The Himalayan Balsam, an invasive plant, is only about 15” in height and not yet in flower so I checked my own identification with the App using the leaf feature. I can now direct volunteers to the site and run a session of balsam bashing/pulling.

In 2019 we planted up a herbaceous cottage border for pollinators at the Jubilee Gate entrance by Bridge 108A in Rishton. The border suffered from lack of attention during Covid-19 and it is early in the season so there are no flowers but I managed to detect the remaining plants from their leaves. We have now replanted the garden with suitable pollinator and wildlife friendly plants.



Pulled Himalayan Balsam



Yellow Flag

Six easy and fast steps.

1. Open the App. Click on the camera at the bottom of the screen.
2. Touch the symbol in the centre of the screen.
3. Take photograph.
4. Click Retry or OK.
5. Then select Leaf/Flower/Fruit/Bark/Habitat or Other.

6. Up pops the image with the details.

Extras - You can confirm, add a GPS location or other information or Share. The images I take go straight into my Gallery so I can open them in the App later whilst enjoying a beverage at home. You can also check your plants online from images saved on your computer. Just Add/Drop them.

<https://identify.plantnet.org/>

In truth, I have not tested the other three Apps as this one achieves what I require. It is not very good for house plants! I will no longer be seen out and about with my 1980s Wildflower ID guide and a magnifying glass! All the plants I photograph are collected and analysed by scientists around the world to better understand the evolution of plant biodiversity and to better preserve it.

You can also check your plants on line from images saved on your computer. Just Add/Drop them. <https://identify.plantnet.org/> I tried it with the plant by the other Jubilee Gate at Norden Bridge – Hedge Mustard – a wonderful plant for attracting Orange Tip butterflies.

Maybe, someone else would like to have a go with the other Apps – [LeafSnap \(iOS\)](#), [PlantSnap \(iOS\)](#), and [Google Lens \(iOS\)](#) - see previous issue!

**Barbara S**

## Butterfly Conservation

It's June! Look out for these butterflies and moths in your gardens, local green spaces and whilst out on your walks with SVRC. We need to increase the flying insects visiting our gardens.

Wildlife charity Butterfly Conservation is warning that time is running out to save some of Britain's best-loved insects, with the latest Red List assessment of butterflies published 25<sup>th</sup> May 2022, revealing a 26% increase in the number of species threatened with extinction.

Gardens are important places for moths, especially as intensive agriculture is limiting the number of suitable habitats in the countryside. There are likely to be over a hundred species in just an ordinary urban back garden! So the way you manage your garden can really help moth conservation.

Links to [Gardening for Butterflies](#) and [Gardening for Moths](#). Free Download: Alan Titchmarsh's [Pit Stops for Pollinators Guide](#)

To discover more species to look out for, with tips on how you can attract them in June and July, sign up for their monthly E-newsletter Visit their for more details Website - <https://butterfly-conservation.org/>



Jean G

## The Boot on the Other Foot

The last remaining boot manufacturer in Britain is based within the small market town of Richmond, but the origins of this company go back to Rochdale... the home of the Rochdale Pioneers and the Co-operative movement, which started in 1844.

In the late 1930's William Shepherd of Rochdale along with likeminded colleagues formed a co-operative to manufacture footwear. The new Richmond factory occupied some of the buildings in a disused First World War army camp situated on a hill just outside the town and overlooked the Norman castle that stands in the centre of the cobbled marketplace.

In 1969, there were over 500 shoe factories all around England... twenty years later in 1989 there were less than 25 remaining. The recessions and the growth of low-cost imports proved too much. In 1989 the Richmond factory was forced to close... it was the largest employer in the town (320 people). The company was among the last remaining British shoe factories of its type to close.

It was from this gloom that Darlington born engineer Mike Sheehan used his redundancy money and teamed up with the expertise of some former workers, to create the **Alt-Berg** brand and a new factory for the manufacturing of walking boots was born. This company is one of Britain's biggest and most heart-warming manufacturing success stories. The Alt-Berg name came from an idea that Alt, meant "high mountain" in German, but later discovered that "alt" means "old". The "Berg" reportedly came from the Carlsberg beer pump in the pub where the concept for the new company was discussed.

The company is now housed within a new modern unit but remains on the same site at Gallowfields. They have expanded their manufacturing base by opening a second factory in Italy, employing 55 people and a further factory in Romania, all to meet increasing orders. The Richmond unit is where new designs, and products are established as well as undertaking a resoling service for used Alt-Berg boots.

**Mike Sheehan Senior**  
Bootmaker and Alt-Berg  
Founder



Michael C



## Heritage and Town Trails

Losing your ability to walk the longer group walks of 6-8 plus miles at a reasonably faster pace can be devastating. However, you do not need to give up walking altogether. There are linear walks on flat canals and alongside rivers and brooks. A waterside walk on your doorstep, or a short journey away, allows you to explore a more tranquil world and connect with nature.

The network of canals and rivers that connect bustling town and city centres to beautiful countryside, mean you don't have to leave town for waterside walks or fascinating town and city trails.

I am quite fond of a town trail as they allow me to get lost in time, explore local shops, have lunch, possibly afternoon tea, always an ice cream enroute, sometimes a beer and really discover a place! I download maps and do a bit of research beforehand so I can be inquisitive and explore hidden places.

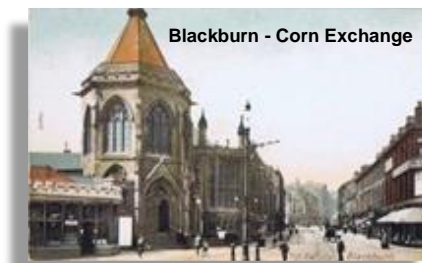
We have many town trails in and around Lancashire. **Pendle** has some fantastic heritage and town trails. Explore the elegance of Barrowford with its high-end shops or discover how Barnoldswick went from steam engines to jet engines. Find out how wealthy Victorian philanthropists lived and worshipped in Brierfield, or worship a different hero, Wallace Hartley, in the town of Colne. [Visit Pendle.](#)



Pendle - Wallace Hartley

In **Burnley** there's lots of beauty just waiting to be discovered from the town centre. There are [six walks](#) including short walks in the parks, 3-mile Wayside Art Walk (shorter route), 4-mile Gawthorpe Park and sections of the 40 mile Burnley Way including the canal.

Discover **Blackburn and Darwen's** incredible history when cotton was king and weaving was big business. [Self-guided trails](#) will help you explore the borough from a new perspective, revealing the stories behind some of Blackburn and Darwen's historic buildings and take you back to a time when the town was "the weaving capital of the world".



**Hyndburn** has its Acorn Town Trail and [lots of local walks](#) based in Accrington, Baxenden, Great Harwood Huncoat and Oswaldtwistle plus park and canal walks. The [Discover Hyndburn](#) walks include seven that are 2-4 miles long but there are others from and 4 to 10 miles.

**Ribble Valley Clitheroe Town Trail** - This trail one-mile is confined to the area that was essentially the developed part of the town from about 1100 until 1800. This includes the land between the castle and the church. [Slaidburn Village Trail](#), Forest of Bowland Walk, at 0.8 miles has information about Slaidburn since Anglo-Saxon times, when the name (which means 'stream by the sheep pasture) was given to the area near the junction of the River Hodder and Croasdale Beck.

**Rossendale Valley** in the heart of the beautiful south Pennines has many walks but I struggled to locate suitable heritage ones for Bacup, Rawtenstall, Haslingden and Waterfoot that listed them but [here is a selection.](#)

I discovered [eight walking trails](#) for **Preston** including their Blue Plaque Trail. The third of a series of self-guided railway walks on the South Fylde Line, a **Town Trail of Lytham**, has been launched by Community Rail Lancashire. This [series of railway walks](#) is designed to encourage people to travel by train along the South Fylde Line and to have an interesting walk from a station to experience some of the history and interesting landscapes.

I will locate more Heritage and Town trails for a future article!

**Barbara S**

## A Magic Cure?

The majority of Spring Vale Ramblers will recognise that walking is one of the most beneficial forms of exercise although it may not be acknowledged that it also helps in terms of our well-being. It is one of the easiest ways of achieving the recommended levels of activity needed to stay healthy without having a negative toll on joints, ligaments, or muscles!

Even Nordic Walking which is easier on the muscles as you use the poles to help take the strain, can eventually affect your health. So, anything that you can do to help avoid these problems should be grasped as a proactive step towards extending and taking full advantage of your “outdoor life”.

After encountering a spell of aches and pains on my knees, shoulders or back, I decided to carry out my own research and stumbled across the claims of the benefits of Turmeric. Although most people would recognise it as a spice that gives a curry its yellow colour, they may not know that it comes from India and is a spice and a medicinal herb. It is the Curcumin in Turmeric that contains the powerful anti-inflammatory effects as well as the strong antioxidants and it is recognised as the most effective nutritional supplement in existence giving major benefits to both body and brain.

By just using Turmeric as a spice, it would be very difficult to reach the levels required to have noticeable effects which is why people choose to take it as a health supplement. Also, Curcumin is poorly absorbed into the bloodstream. If you take your Turmeric as a herbal tea by adding a little black pepper this can help absorption by 2,000%!! Some Turmeric capsules do contain black pepper and ginger giving that extra zing and help with absorption.



Turmeric in root form



Turmeric in powder form

Chronic low level inflammation can play a role in some health conditions such as heart disease, Alzheimer's, degenerative conditions, mild digestive problems and even Cancer. If Curcumin does help to suppress inflammation then that may also help to ward off these other ailments too.

Oxidants add damage to these ailments as well as to general aging. Curcumin which is a potent antioxidant can help to neutralise these problems.

As you approach a hill on your walk, how many times have you thought Oh, Oh. I might get out of puff here! It is believed that the main benefit of Curcumin when it comes to heart disease is that it improves the function of the heart by improving the lining of your blood vessels.

Many walkers may start to suffer from Arthritis, a common problem in Western Countries. Although there are many different types of Arthritis, most are inflammation of the joints. As Curcumin is a potent anti-inflammatory, it makes sense that it may help with this problem. In fact, there are claims that it was more effective than anti-inflammatory drugs.

Although Curcumin is approved as a food additive by the World Health Organisation, European Parliament and the USA Food and Drug Administration, there is as yet no high-quality clinical evidence for it being effective for treating any disease.

However, after taking Turmeric myself over a period I can report that I have noticed a difference. I don't ache as much; my muscles are not as easily tired, and my breathing is more relaxed. There are also lots of anecdotal reports of similar instances so as this is a natural herb/spice I will continue to take it and keep you informed of my progress.

**Glenda B**