

Ramblers Gems



A Spring Vale Rambling Class Publication

Volume 3 Issue 26

1st July 2022

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

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Not as it Seems

Social media reports stated that the hills were spoilt with fly tipping, Britain's wild places had been trashed, inconsiderate and ill-equipped walkers were everywhere, devastating moorland fires had wreaked havoc and certain honeypots in the Lake District or the Peak District would be spoilt forever.

Surely life would never be the same again but was it true or was it just fake news? Were things really that bad or was it just a small number of occasions reported in a way that had tainted the bigger picture?



I believed that on my next trip I would experience overcrowding, rubbish, locked gates, hostility from landowners even to responsible campers, but more than anything, I worried that it would have a permanent effect on the countryside and my enjoyment of the day.

There is no doubt that early on during the Covid outbreak and the ensuing increase in new walkers taking to the countryside, there was a huge upturn in incidents. Hotspots were hit by inconsiderate parking or moorland fires as a result of disposable BBQ's caused not by ramblers, but by the general public trying to escape their houses on a picnic. But these instances have decreased with time. New "No Disposable BBQ's" signs have gone up in sensitive areas, and people new to walking have had the Country or Access code explained and have seemingly modified their behaviour.

How can we help this new group of walkers? They may not be aware of how to behave in a responsible way if no one has explained things to them. More rangers would help, but money is tight for councils, so it is hard to get an increase in the number of rangers patrolling the honey spots. The new walkers need to be encouraged to enjoy their experience into the countryside without harming the environment or disturbing others. So, an increase in campaigns like the Take it Home anti-litter campaign or undertaking courses like SOFA 2 SUMMIT will help to explain the basics of exploring the countryside.

This will also reassure the hardened walker that isolated incidents haven't spoiled our landscapes forever and will help all to enjoy wild places responsibly. So, continue to savour your walking.
Glenda B

July Musings

The seventh month of the year in the Julian and Gregorian calendars, named in about 44 B.C. by the Roman Senate in honour of Julius Caesar, as it was the month of his birth.

The Anglo-Saxon names for July included Heymonath or Maed monath, which refer to haymaking and meadow flowers.

On average July is the warmest month in most of the Northern Hemisphere, with “Dog Days” beginning in early July.

Dog Days, are the hot, sultry days of summer, (let’s hope we get a few). Historically the period following the heliacal rising (first appearance over the horizon) of the Dog Star – Sirius, which Hellenistic astrology connected with heat, drought, thunderstorms, lethargy, fever, mad dogs and bad luck!! Greek poets recorded the belief that the return of the bright star was responsible for bringing heat and fever. The Romans continued to blame Sirius for the heat of the season and associated lethargy and diseases, complaining of “scorching dog-star fires” and giving the advice to feed dogs chicken manure to curb their tendency to attack and bite in July.

Western Medicine did not escape either with the 1564 English “Hope of Health” warning against bloodletting and purging during “Dogge Daies” of summer. The Husbandman’s Practice, 1729 claimed that the heat of the sun is so violent that men’s bodies at midnight sweat as at Midday, and to keep “away” from women.

Sirius is actually 8.7 light years away from Earth and has no effect whatsoever on the weather or temperature. However, an *unverified* Finnish study reported a connection between dog days and an increased risk of deep surgical wound infections.

Sirius The Dog Star



Festivals and Traditions

The Henley Royal Regatta, takes place in the first week of July at Henley on Thames. The first regatta was in 1839 with a single afternoon of rowing races.

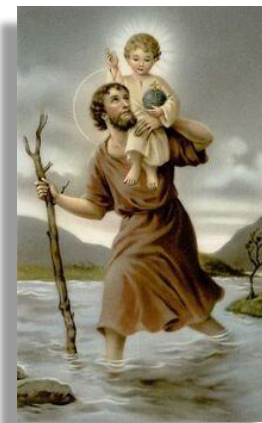
Swan Upping, a census of the swans on a 70 mile stretch of the Thames takes place during July. Swans are counted and marked.

15th July - St Swithin’s Day whatever the weather is like on this day, so it will continue for the next 40 days.

25th July – St. James Day, also known as Grotto Day. Children would make grottoes and decorate them with scallop shells, which is the emblem of St James. St James is the patron saint of pilgrims, and many travellers nowadays have a scallop shell attached to their rucksacks. The pilgrimage of Camino de Santiago is marked with scallop shell signs as route markers.



25th July – also - St Christopher’s Day the patron saint of travellers after he allegedly carried an unknown child across a river. The child then revealed himself as Christ.



St Christopher

Jane

TO A RED ADMIRAL BUTTERFLY by Benita Moore MBE

I've watched you there for half an hour
Sunning yourself near my garden wall.
Your fragile wings fluttering round each flower
And the honeysuckle climbing tall.
It's marvellous that until last spring
Your beauty was hidden in a shell;
A chrysalis masking a butterfly's wing
But of what species – who could tell? Then –
As the sun's warm fingers pulsed your heart
And caressed the jewels that were your eye,
The wonders of nature played their part – and
You emerged –

A perfect Red Admiral Butterfly!



Pesto Cenorr

TO THE WOODS by Benita Moore MBE

I love these woodland paths and ways
Where bluebells scent the leafy glade,
The bubbling stream sparkles and plays
And fragile ferns fan mossy shade.
I love the sedges and tree root
Where dwells the moorhen and the coot,
The precious orchid shyly hid
Flourishes new at nature's bid.
I love to see the wagtails dash –
Amongst the waters bob and splash
Where celandines smile rank on rank
And modest violets grace the bank.
I love these woodlands paths and parts
Where kingfisher dives low and darts,
Sweet primrose dimples every dell
The ranks of woodland flowers to swell.
The gentle windflower blowing wild
Reminds me of a fairy child
Who danced and sparkled through the wood
Aware of nature's solitude.
Yes I love each woodland path and glade
And will do till I end my days,
Though far away I now must be –
They're still precious in my memory.

Local Authoress - Benita Moore

The mother-of-two, affectionately known as 'Mrs Lancashire,' wrote 12 books and volumes of poetry on the days of the cloth caps and cobbles in her native East Lancashire and sold almost 30,000 copies. A member of Accrington Cine Club and Oswaldtwistle Civic Society, she worked in the local studies department of Accrington Library, as a librarian for 43 years. She lost her fight for life just a fortnight after being honoured with an MBE. Benita was battling against cancer in Blackburn's East Lancashire Hospice when news came through of her honour in the Queen's Birthday List. She died of breast cancer in June 1998, aged 59. Benita had a great love of nature and enjoyed writing about it. They were her observations of nature and how they affect our lives.

Pesto Cenorr

Walking is Good for the Soul

Walking is good for the soul. A walk in the woods, through the park, or along the shore will lift even the darkest of moods.

Walking meditation is like eating. With each step, we nourish our body and our spirit.

Walking in mindfulness brings us peace and joy and makes our life real. Why rush? Our final destination will only be the cemetery.

The reality is that simply going for a walk is not likely to clear depression, but it might make some difference. If it clears it by ten percent, then it's worth doing.

Twenty minutes' walking will give you plenty of productive thinking time, lets you appreciate your surroundings and smell the air, and helps you put things into focus.

Eleanor

The Brontës at Wycoller

Ramblers Gems recently included an article on the school the Brontë's attended at Cowan Bridge, this piece describes their association with Wycoller Hall.

The hamlet of Wycoller lies about 4 miles east of Colne and the ruins of Wycoller Hall form part of a country park.

Wycoller Hall, dates back to late 16th C, and was built upon the site of a previous house built 1500's. The estate passed into the Cunliffe family in the early 1600's and remained in the same family until 1818m, when the current owner, a cock – fighting squire, died leaving extensive gambling debts. The estate was parcelled off to the creditors, with the hall being passed on to a distant relative Rev. John Oldham, who arranged for the stonework to be sold off to build a cotton mill at Trawden.

However, much of the hall survived into the late 19th C, although steadily crumbling and stonework being removed for local buildings. The entire village passed into the ownership of the local water board, but the decline continued. In 1948 "The Friends of Wycoller" was founded to conserve the village, in 1973 Lancashire County Council bought the area and declared it a conservation area and the surrounding 350 acres were designated as a country park. The ruins of the hall are now a listed grade 2 scheduled monument.

The Brontë sisters would often walk from Haworth to visit the Kay- Shuttleworth family at Gawthorpe Hall. Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth was a great friend and admirer of Charlotte Brontë. It is thought that they passed through Wycoller on their way to Gawthorpe Hall and frequently enjoyed walking in the area. The Hall is believed to be the inspiration for Ferndean Manor in "Jane Eyre" and the 1989 edition of the book used Wycoller Hall to illustrate the cover.



The ruins of Wycoller Hall today



Wycoller Hall as it would have looked in Charlotte Brontë's day.

Below is an extract from Chapter 37 of Jane Eyre by Charlotte Brontë.

"The manor-house of Ferndean was a building of considerable antiquity, moderate size and no architectural pretensions, deep buried in a wood. I had heard of it before. Mr. Rochester often spoke of it, and sometimes went there. His father had purchased the estate for the sake of the game coverts. He would have let the house, but could find no tenant, in consequence of its ineligible and insalubrious site. Ferndean then remained uninhabited and unfurnished with the exception of some two or three rooms fitted up for the accommodation of the squire when he went there in the season to shoot".

Interestingly, Elizabeth Cunliffe of the Hall became Elizabeth Eyre following her second marriage and this did not escape Charlotte! Neither did the cock-fighting squire – as this trait was seen in Mr Rochester's father.

The Brontë Way, a 42 mile walk, stretches from Oakwell Hall near Birstall in Yorkshire to Gawthorpe Hall near Padiham, linking a host of locations associated with the family.

There are, of course, some ghost stories associated with Wycoller Hall..... but perhaps a story or two for later editions.

Jane C

On New Ground

It is strange that no matter how many years that you have been walking in your local area there are still places that for some reason or another you have never visited. And when this is remedied, you wonder why? Well, one such occasion has recently occurred to me.

The walk started from the village of Barley, a small hamlet nestling under the shadow of Pendle Hill and headed off in the direction of Pendle, passing the Barley Mow, a delightful country pub in the heart of the village. Instead of turning to the left, the traditional way to climb the Hill, we continued straight on and took the reservoir road leading up to the Lower and Upper Black Moss Reservoirs. After observing a couple of Grebe diving for fish in the centre of the reservoirs our way was signposted off to the right.

We were now heading up the well-defined forest track that was the start of the Pendle Sculpture Trail in Aitken Wood. This was a new place for me. The Trail has ten ceramic plaques, each has its own unique symbols which represent each of the Pendle people who were hanged 400 years ago in the biggest witchcraft trial in the country. The plaques are presented in a treasure trail style quiz to be hunted down and found! There were also a number of mythical creatures dotted throughout the wood, each presenting a clue to give you. When you've worked out all the clues, they spell out a name. (This we only found out when we investigated the site online after the walk). The track is a circular route around the hill, so don't be misled by older maps that show a concessionary footpath emerging on the south side, for it is no longer there, as we found out. On our way around we discovered work from Lead Artist, Philippe Handford, which included a "walking wall", an eerie tree that will grab you by the roots, and "tumbling" tree arches. There is also a life size Witchfinder General figure and creatures such as bats, spiders and a Unicorn.



Bats

Unicorn

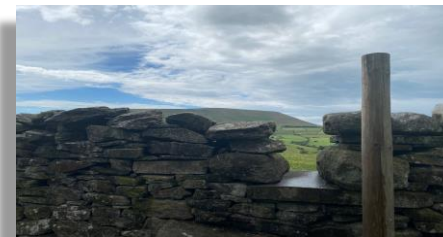


After completing the full circuit, you have the option of only visiting the Sculpture Trail and returning back to Barley to then enjoy a pint or tea and cake in the Barley Mow, this would be a 3 mile walk, or continue on for a longer walk. We decided on the longer walk and pressed on around to Roughlee, another village famed for its connection with the Pendle Witches and the home to Alice Nutter. We resumed the route and went on to climb to the ridge and on to Noggarth Cottage, this establishment has been serving teas and meals to walkers for over 100 years, and well worth a visit. The views are now over to the once industrial cotton towns of Colne, Nelson and Burnley and the hills of Boulsworth and Hameldon beyond.

We now pressed on, picking our way through field paths and arrived at Clarion House. The property was built in 1912 for the Nelson Independent Labour Party and is the last remaining house of its kind across the country, but still serves refreshments on a Sunday. (See RG Vol 3 Issue 19 13/05/2022 for more information).



Our way was again uphill as we climbed towards Newchurch in Pendle. The Church of St Mary is renowned for the "Eye of God" built into the west side of the tower to deter evil spirits. To the east of the porch, up against the south wall, is the grave of a member of the Nutter family (carved with a skull and crossbones). Local legend has it that it is the last resting place of Alice Nutter. From here it was a short walk back down into Barley and that well deserved drink after completing 8 miles.



Pendle Hill

Michael C