

# Ramblers Gems



A Spring Vale Rambling Class Publication

Volume 3 Issue 32

12th August 2022

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

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 Ramblers Remembered
- 2 Idle Women
- 3 Lister Well Road
- 4 New National Trail
- 5 John Barleycorn

## Ramblers Remembered

Gosh don't we all look young! It was the 110th anniversary year for the Spring Vale Rambling Class and the group wanted to celebrate by having an exhibition in the Information Centre in Sunnyhurst Woods. Previously, a small group had set themselves up to produce and edit a Millennium publication called, surprisingly, Ramblers Gems. Members were asked for contributions, and these ranged from walk experiences overseas to food recipes! Mavis Briggs and Josie Southworth played a very important part in the meetings by providing tea and cakes. Just a little personal memory of Mavis at this sad time. The service is on Friday 19<sup>th</sup> at 10:45 at the Crematorium followed by refreshments at the Olde England Café  
**Glenda B**



Michael Couter, Glenda Brindle, Bob Briggs, Josie Southworth, Mavis Briggs, Alan Southworth  
at the 110<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Exhibition at Sunnyhurst Wood Information Centre in 2005

## 'Idle Women'

Most people are familiar with the 'Land Girls'; the women who volunteered to work the land to aid the war effort during World War Two. Less well known, however, are their canal-based equivalents; known undeservedly as the 'Idle Women'. Women trainees kept the waterways operating during WWII.

The 'Idle Women,' were about as far from idle as anybody could possibly be, the women canal workers performed vital war work, which is all but forgotten today, some seventy plus years later.

The women would undertake two trips over the course of five days, all the while 'living, eating and sleeping in a cabin 10 foot by 7 foot,' and then receiving three days' unpaid leave after the completion of their last trip. For the round trip of some three weeks on board consisting of 18-20 hour days, the 'girls' were paid £3 per week. Unlike the Land Girls, they received no extra rations subsisting on "cocoa with condensed milk, national loaf and peanut butter".

Many of these women were barely into their twenties, and most had no boating experience; each receiving just six weeks training at the start of their posting. They came from all walks of life; debutantes, bombed out East-enders and even a soon-to-be duchess operated the boats. One of the trainers, Kit Grayford, was a former ballet dancer. The Department of War Transport's only requirement was that young women who applied had to be 'of robust constitution'.

Their numbers were small, some 45 women, aged from 18 to about 35, worked on the canals and waterways of England between 1943-46. Unlike the Land Girls, the Idle Women have never received any official recognition for their contribution to the war effort, although British Waterways (now the Canal & River Trust) unveiled a plaque in their honour at the National Waterways Museum in Stoke Bruerne, Northamptonshire in 2008.



Women trainees keep the waterways operating during WWII.

It was not just the Grand Union Canal that women worked upon during the Second World War. In January 1945 the *Liverpool Evening Express* advised that 'Women volunteers to work barges on the Leeds and Liverpool Canal should apply at 74, Pall Mall, Liverpool.' In a Ministry of War Transport backed scheme, women were invited to undertake a two-month long training course:

The first part of the training was given in a school ashore, where models of barges were explained, and the geography of the canal studied. Later the women received their practical instruction on a motor barge. Training, also involved "theoretical and practical lessons in such complex subjects as navigation, engineering, rope-handling, and the use of lock-gates.

After having successfully completed their training, new recruits could expect to be given 'control of a barge, transporting essential cargoes.' New recruits should be 'between the ages of 20 and 35, and...physically fit and strong.'

And what were these new recruits nicknamed - The 'Barge Belles' of Leeds and Liverpool! 'There is no reason in the world why women shouldn't do the job just as well as men,' said Training Instructor, Mr. William Baldwin, 'They are very adaptable, and a few weeks' practical work will soon harden them.'

Today, on the East Lancs section of the Leeds-Liverpool canal you will find that the three Lead Volunteers are all women. We are certainly not idle, we undergo a lot of training and continue the legacy and tradition of women on our inland waterways. Patricia Grant, Lead Volunteer Rosegrove Hub, has recently undertaken the Helmsman's course.



Barbara Sharples, Nick Munroe Turner and Elaine Parker at the Marsh Trust Awards, Anderton Boat Lift 2021

**Barbara S**

## Lister Well Road

On the Spring Vale Ramblers' recent walk in the Blacko area several questions were raised but answers were not forthcoming. I was following walk instructions from an old book around Blacko and Whitemoor Reservoir. Last time I looked (well Googled) answers about Blacko Tower and the Fanny Grey Inn that was. Now I have researched and found some answers for what was or who was the Lister of Lister Well on Lister Well Road, the old bridleway coming over White Moor from Barnoldswick. These are both indicated on the current OS map of the area.

The 1580 map of the area shows Lister Well at the side of the "occupation road", which refers to any road which gives access to enclosures of land which were under multiple tenancies.

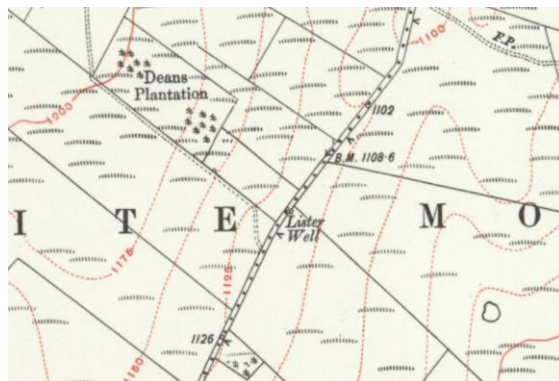
Why Lister Well? In 1403 a John Lister of Barnoldswick and Middop (to the west of Barnoldswick near to Rimminton) was buried at Sawley Abbey. The Listers were a gentry family becoming the Lords of Ribblesdale. In 1614/15 Thomas Lister bought the Manor of Gisburn and his son Thomas Lister built a house in Gisburn in 1635, which is now the Ribblesdale Arms. The Lister family continued to acquire land in the area, and the well lies in the middle of their empire. So, although no concrete evidence links the family with the well, the connections are there.

Local folk lore has linked curative powers to the waters from the well since pagan times. In fact, it has been preserved in local memory so well that as late as the 20<sup>th</sup> century, old Barlickers would tell of being taken to the well for a drink, or bottles of water being brought down from the moors to drink, if they were too ill to get there themselves. What the water was supposed to cure was not documented, and we can only surmise how the tradition started.



Lister Well Road as it crosses White Hill

In his book "Religion and the decline of Magic" Keith Thomas makes a good argument for the definition of magic was the way people who had no control of events tried to influence those events. Disease and illness were important events and with no medical science as we know it today, even a minor illness could prove fatal. The only defence was to resort to magic and water from wells was regarded as having curative properties. If the well happened to be on the land of the local well -to -do landowner, then naming the well after them was seen as a good move.



Spring Vale Ramblers walking along Lister Well Road

Very little remains of the well today, except for a few stones fallen over in the field. Having been further damaged when the gas or electricity board working in the area uprooted the stone trough and caused destruction of the supply.

The current map shows the water re- emerging on the other side of the wall.

Jane C

## New National Trail

It has been announced that the Coast to Coast route stretching from St Bees in Cumbria to Robin Hoods Bay in the North York Moors National Park will become a new National Trail. Natural England will work alongside partners to improve this popular route, with £5.6 million committed to upgrade the 197-mile path. This includes funding set aside to develop a community engagement programme and maximise economic and health benefits for local people and businesses.

This announcement delivers on a Government commitment to develop the route, and will also ensure long-term support for the National Trail. There are significant benefits to the Coast to Coast becoming a part of the internationally recognised National Trails family, including meeting the National Trail Quality Standards with investment to ensure:

- The path is made more accessible for people of different abilities. This could include measures to remove stiles and using accessible gates where possible
- High quality signage, waymarking, path surfaces and infrastructure are provided consistently across the whole route
- Circular paths and link routes are developed to make the trail more accessible for those interested in taking shorter walks
- The route is well promoted including being featured on the Visit Britain and National Trail's website to create new opportunities for international and domestic tourism

Natural England will work alongside the Lake District, North York Moors and Yorkshire Dales National Parks as well as Cumbria and North Yorkshire County Councils to improve the path. Enhancements will be undertaken over three years with the upgraded path expected to open in 2025. It is intended that the new National Trail will closely follow the existing route. While 85% of the existing route is a public right of way or on land with existing legal access rights there are some locations where changes to the existing rights of way or new paths are needed to ensure the long-term sustainability of the trail. 9.7 miles of new public footpath.



Natural England will now begin to discuss the proposals to create:

- 9 miles of new public bridleway
- 5 miles of realignment of existing rights of way.

The Coast to Coast route passes through some of our most spectacular countryside, villages and natural habitats in the North of England .

Eric Robson OBE DL, Chairman, The Wainwright Society:

*“The designation of Wainwright’s Coast to Coast Walk as a National Trail has long been one of the Society’s ambitions. The Walk is one of the country’s most popular long-distance routes and helps support businesses and jobs from St Bees to Robin Hood’s Bay, including in some of the north’s most sparsely populated rural communities. We very much welcome, therefore, the news that the route will become a new National Trail.*

*This is the start, of course, of bringing the project to successful fruition. But this is a very exciting and important step and we look forward to working with partners along the route to establish the C2C Walk as one of the UK’s great National Trails. As Alfred Wainwright said of the walk he devised: “Surely there cannot be a finer itinerary for a long-distance walk!”*

The C2C walk allows you to experience walking in the Lake District mountains, to see the best of the Yorkshire Dales, to walk up and down the rolling hills of the North York Moors, and all awhile learning of our ancient and pre-industrial past. If you get the opportunity to complete this walk, then take up the challenge.

**Michael C**

## John Barleycorn

### A Ballad Written In 1782 by Robert Burns

There was three kings into the east,  
Three kings both great and high,  
And they hae sworn a solemn oath  
John Barleycorn should die.

They took a plough and plough'd him down,  
Put clods upon his head,  
And they hae sworn a solemn oath  
John Barleycorn was dead.

But the chearful Spring came kindly on,  
And show'rs began to fall;  
John Barleycorn got up again,  
And sore surpris'd them all.

The sultry suns of Summer came,  
And he grew thick and strong,  
His head weel arm'd wi' pointed spears,  
That no one should him wrong.

The sober Autumn enter'd mild,  
When he grew wan and pale;  
His bending joints and drooping head  
Show'd he began to fail.

His colour sicken'd more and more,  
He faded into age;  
And then his enemies began  
To show their deadly rage.

They've taen a weapon, long and sharp,  
And cut him by the knee;  
Then ty'd him fast upon a cart,  
Like a rogue for forgerie.

They laid him down upon his back,  
And cudgell'd him full sore;  
They hung him up before the storm,  
And turn'd him o'er and o'er.

They filled up a darksome pit  
With water to the brim;  
They heaved in John Barleycorn,  
There let him sink or swim.

They laid him out upon the floor,  
To work him farther woe;  
And still, as signs of life appear'd,  
They toss'd him to and fro.

They wasted, o'er a scorching flame,  
The marrow of his bones;  
But a miller us'd him worst of all,  
For he crush'd him between two stones.

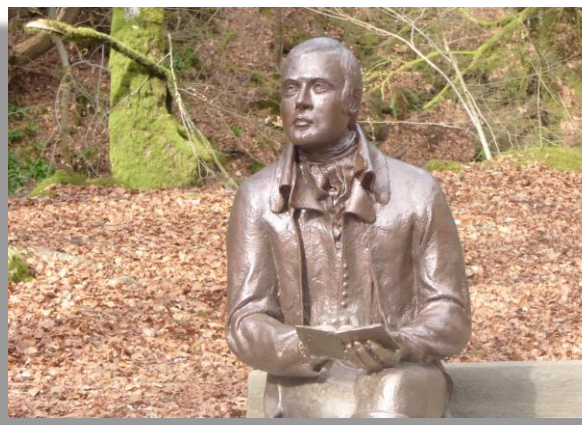
And they hae taen his very heart's blood,  
And drank it round and round;  
And still the more and more they drank,  
Their joy did more abound.

John Barleycorn was a hero bold,  
Of noble enterprise;  
For if you do but taste his blood,  
'Twill make your courage rise.

'Twill make a man forget his woe;  
'Twill heighten all his joy;  
'Twill make the widow's heart to sing,  
Tho' the tear were in her eye.

Then let us toast John Barleycorn,  
Each man a glass in hand;  
And may his great posterity  
Ne'er fail in old Scotland!

*John Barleycorn, the ballad is a tribute to barley and of the alcoholic beverages made from it: beer and whisky. In the song, he suffers indignities, attacks, and death that correspond to the various stages of barley cultivation, such as reaping and malting.*



Robert Burns (1759-1796)

Pesto Cenorr