

Ramblers Gems



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INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 Corn Milling in Blackburn
- 2 September Snippets / Jeppe Knave Grave
- 3 Bridges with a History
- 4 Lost Villages
- 5 The Peak District Boundary Walk

Corn Milling in Blackburn

If you have ever walked along the Leeds to Liverpool Canal through Blackburn in the Daisyfield area you would have passed the impressive building that was once a corn mill. The site differs from the adjacent buildings in style and its striking construction with red brick. On the canal side the building is still identified by its former use as a news gathering studio and still proudly bears the large “G” of the Granada TV company. The old mill site resides amongst the once prosperous spinning and cotton weaving mills that made Blackburn renowned during the peak of the “King Cotton” era of the nineteenth century.

Corn milling was the earliest mechanised industry in Blackburn and water-powered mills are known to have existed during the medieval period. The introduction of roller milling in the 1880s led to the closure of the smaller mills using grinding stones.



The Daisyfield Mill continued working until the middle of the twentieth century when transport and economic factors led to the end of large scale milling in Blackburn.

Originally, corn was hoisted up from the canal towpath and into the doorways on the upper floors. The milling process used ten pairs of stones powered by a Musgrave engine. A major fire in 1875 caused the mill to be restored and extended. In 1883 the mill was converted to a roller milling operation, no longer using milling stones.

Two railway tracks also connected the mill to the East Lancashire line. Cast iron pillars and brick vaulted ceilings were designed to add protection against fire.

Daisyfield was very successful and by 1889, 3,000 sacks of flour were being produced each week by over 40 workers.

The mill was taken over by Joseph Rank Ltd in 1928, and closed in 1968. It was subsequently used as a warehouse. It was converted to offices around 1990 as part of a scheme to regenerate derelict canalside sites within Blackburn.

Michael C

September Snippets

September comes from the Roman word “septem” which mean seven, as in the Roman calendar it was the seventh month. The Anglo-Saxons called it Gerst monath (Barley Month) because it was when they harvested the barley to brew! It was also known as Haefest monath or harvest moth for obvious reasons.

The Romans believed that the month of September was looked after by the god Vulcan and expected September to be associated with fires, volcanic eruptions, and earthquakes.

The Gregorian calendar is the one used nowadays, named after Pope Gregory XIII, and was introduced in 1582. A leap year is every 4 years, (97 leaps every 400 years) and as such corresponds closely with the astronomical year (365.24219).

The Julian Calendar was used in Britain until 1753. It is based on the solar year, the time taken for the Earth to rotate around the Sun and is less accurate than the Gregorian calendar. The Julian Calendar was 365.25 days long, which was fractionally too long, and the calendar fell out of line with the seasons.

In 1752 Britain decided to correct this by swapping from the Julian calendar to the more accurate Gregorian Calendar. By doing so the 3rd of September instantly became the 14th of September. As a result, nothing whatsoever happened in British history between 3rd – 13th September 1752. People protested on the streets “Give us back our 11 days!” thinking their lives would be shortened.



Jane C

Jeppe Knave Grave

A little known destination hidden on the bleak windswept moorland of Wiswell Moor but is clearly marked on the OS map, and is the location of this mysterious grave.

The road out of Sabden leads up to the Nick o’ Pendle, heading towards Clitheroe and the Ribble Valley. If you arrive by car then parking is available at the top of the road. The short walk starts by turning onto the farm track heading west and after only a few metres a footpath heads off to the right climbing the hill. Once at the top follow the path until you eventually come to the white concrete pillar of the triangulation point. Continue on past the trig point, over the stile and then immediately on the left over another stile and continue heading west. Soon you will come to an overgrown grassy area containing several scattered stones, you have arrived at your destination “Jeppe Knave Grave.” Engraved on one of the stones is the name confirming you are in the right place.

This stone marks the final resting place of one Jeppe Curteys (Geoffrey Curtis), a local robber who was decapitated for his crimes in the first year of Edward III, reign in 1327. The name first occurs in a record of the boundaries between Wiswall and Pendleton dated 1342.

Local traditions tells the story of this grave site being in this remote, unusual position is because none of the local parishes wanted to pay for a decent burial for a knave or robber, so his slain body was taken to the point where the parishes of Pendleton, Wiswell and Sabden meet and interred there. However, it appears the point where the parishes meet is actually some way away at the summit of Wiswell Moor, so Jeppe was buried on the site of a Bronze Age burial mound – perceived by the locals as pagan ground and a fitting final resting place for such a ne’er do well.

Retrace your footsteps and head back to the Nick.



Michael C

Bridges with a History

The Fairy Bridge

Legend has it that Fairy Bridge, also known as Saddle Bridge, which spans Bashall Brook, at Bashall Eaves beyond West Bradford, was built one night by fairies. The story goes that the village woodcutter was being pursued by a pack of howling witches, hell bent on torturous retribution to the poor man for destroying their sacred tree. The local fairies who had befriended the man for his kindest and understanding decided to help and raised in an instance a stone bridge. The woodcutter was able to escape quickly over the bridge to safety, for witches are unable to cross running water. The Bridge is possibly C17th and was restored in 1938 is narrow with single tall segmental arch and solid parapets with boulder copings. The southern side has a plaque inscribed: 'Rebuilt by Public Subscription 1938'.



Fairy Bridge at Bashall Eaves

Cromwell Bridge

The old stone bridge crossing the River Hodder near to Clitheroe is commonly known as Cromwell's Bridge is clearly observed while crossing the more modern road bridge on the way to Hurst Green. It was built around 1562 by Sir Richard Shireburn of Stonyhurst Estate now Stonyhurst College. The bridge is named after Oliver Cromwell when in August 1648 the Parliamentarian leader marched his Model Army over it to fight the Royalists at the Battle of Preston. Cromwell's decisive victory led to the end of the Second English Civil War and the execution of Charles I. Prior to the battle, legend has it that Oliver Cromwell slept in full body armour on a table at Stonyhurst. He refused to sleep in a bed, fearing that the Catholic owners might assassinate him. Cromwell's Bridge is no longer in use, but it is still intact and it is possible to walk across it.



The Cromwell Bridge Clitheroe

The Clapper Bridge at Wycoller

The Clapper bridge, sometimes called the Druids' Bridge, Weavers' Bridge or the Hall Bridge, is just a short distance along the beck after Wycoller Hall in the picturesque village of Wycoller. This is a very primitive structure but of massive proportions consisting of three flat gritstone slabs resting on two stone piers, one being a round-shaped boulder, the other a thinner pillar-shaped stone that looks quite fragile, but it is in fact very strong. It was originally a two-slab bridge supported on one central pier.

However, the bridge has succumbed to floods over the years and has had to be reconstructed a few times. Its three slabs are heavily worn by hundreds of years of use. There is a legend that says this bridge led to a grove where druids practiced their strange rituals; there is no sign of this mystical grove or amphitheatre today, and the handloom weavers of Wycoller have long-since hung up their clogs! The clapper bridge is thought to date from the 16th-17th century, though a few historians *'think'* it might date from before the Norman conquest (Bentley, John, 1993).



The Clapper Bridge at Wycoller

Eleanor

Lost Villages

The local newspaper, the Lancashire Telegraph, ran an offer of a reduced price for readers to buy a DVD entitled "Lost Villages". The DVD is based on the book by author Henry Buckton and looks at villages all over Britain that were lost during the 20th Century. I decided to take up the offer and have tended to dip in and out of the video rather than watch the whole in its entirety.

The film begins quite low key, though interesting, looking at villages that sprang into existence because of rich deposits in the area (coal, lead, copper and tin). However, once the deposits ran out, the village would go into terminal decline. Few people would have had a car at that time, so they would have to move house to go where work was available.

Spring Vale Ramblers have often explored the Rossendale Valley, where the remains of now derelict farmsteads can be seen. The residents/tenants of the farmsteads were effectively evicted by the local water authority, who owned the surrounding lands to allow the building of reservoirs into the valley to supply water to the expanding towns of Haslingden and Rawtenstall. Compensation would have been paid—some more generous than others.



Lost Villages at Clough Head Reservoir off Grane Road Haslingden

The Rossendale farmsteads are not featured on the DVD, but one area that is will be familiar with Spring Vale Ramblers, that is Stocks Reservoir, where the village of Stocks (or Daleshead) once stood, until the villagers were evicted to make way for the new Stock Reservoir. Only the church survived. It was dismantled stone by stone and rebuilt further up the valley.



Stocks Lost Village comes to light after a spell of exceptionally dry weather

Often the villagers to be evicted would be given a month to find alternative accommodation, sometimes they would be the last to hear of the plans. During the Second World War at least one village in the south of England was requisitioned by the Ministry of Defence, to be used as a training ground for the army. An assurance was given that once hostilities were over, they would be allowed to return. However, this promise was not kept, and the village houses are still used for target practice today.

The Ministry of Defence seems to have a habit of getting its own way. Some years after the war they had a whole village demolished, so that they could extend a military airfield for a new experimental aircraft that needed more space for take-off. To add insult to injury the project was abandoned soon after. The MOD certainly does not come out of the DVD very well, neither does the Ministry of Transport, for a village is featured in the film that was removed in order to widen a nearby road. The project simply increased the amount of traffic along the road which is now regularly blocked by traffic jams. The problem has not been solved.



Rural traffic Jam

Tony C

The Peak District Boundary Walk Continued

As I promised last week, I have returned to continue the Peak District Boundary Walk and the next highlight and one of the prettiest discoveries that you will find is the Wyoming Brook and it lies in this next section. A wooded gorge on the western edge of Sheffield it is a tumbling stream with skyscraper pine trees. This always formed the part of a route for the scenic drive which vintage cars took down a grassy path in the 1920's and must have offered viewers a sight to remember.

Birchen Edge Just west of Chesterfield people may be aware of this escarpment but may not be fully conversant with the history of the trio of rocks standing at the top of this Edge which actual is a monument dedicated to Lord Nelson and is known as the three ships. Each is inscribed with a name of one of the vessels under Nelson's command at the Battle of Trafalgar: Victory, Defiance and Royal Soverin. What a sight!

The Nine Ladies Our next highlight takes us further back in history and is a silent group of standing stones formed into a stone circle. These stones, according to the story, are believed to represent nine young girls who were turned to stone for dancing on the Sabbath, the holy day. It is part of a wider network of stone circles and other ancient sites straddled across Stanton Moor.

Ilam Although this whole next stretch of the walk is renowned for its incredible beauty taking us through villages such as Tissington and Thorpe, many believe that Ilam offers perhaps the most beautiful village in this stretch. The serenity offered to walkers in this area of the White Peak District is crowned with the stunning youth hostel at Ilam Hall.



Ilam Hall Youth Hostel

Shutlingsloe and Tegg's Nose After crossing the wild moorlands of Staffordshire these two splendid landmarks offer a break in the landscape. At 1660ft above sea level, Shutlingsloe is actually the highest point on the trail and offers the walker glorious views in all directions. A little later the route passes through the Macclesfield Forest where a climb up the great prow of Tegg's Nose can be undertaken. Meaning sheep's nose it is a quarried summit reminding us of the whole walk and the clash between landscape and industry.

Lyme Park This next stretch of the trail contains a spectacular hunting lodge named The Cage and is set in extensive beautiful parklands with deer roaming freely. Perfect for a stop to eat your refreshments and who would realise that place is so close to civilisation.



Lyme Park

The Goyt Valley On this last stretch the journey meanders through this quiet valley on the way back to Buxton. The ruins of Errwood Hall are worth the extra effort of a slight detour. Owned by a rich Manchester industrial dynasty which when it died out, the ancestral home was unceremoniously demolished to provide stone for the Goyt valley reservoir! Once again, an example of early recycling which took place long ago before the word was claimed by today's campaigners.

I hope that my article may have tempted you to give this trail a try. It's so easy to plan the walk as there are many places offering accommodation including B&B's along the route. The edges of the larger towns make it difficult to select from as they are many and varied but the southern section choice lies in small hamlets for an unforgettable stopover. Options range from upmarket establishments on the Chatsworth Estate to YHA hostels. Just chose to match your needs, what your pocket can afford or if you prefer, do it in daily stretches not in one go.

Thanks to Tony W who inspired me to write about this walk.

Glenda B