

Ramblers Gems



A Spring Vale Rambling Class Publication

Volume 3 Issue 36

9th September 2022

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Queen Elizabeth II (1926-2022)

God save the King

The Day we met the Queen

To celebrate Queen Elizabeth's Silver Jubilee in the summer of 1977, Pat Parrott a rambling friend from Clitheroe, myself and another guy from Rossendale whose name I forget, set off on an epic relay walk from Lancaster Castle, down the length of the country to finish in Windsor Great Park, with the opportunity to meet the Queen.

The relay walk had been planned by Mary Lady Towneley, the wife of the Sir Andrew Towneley the then Lord Lieutenant of Lancashire. It was the persuasive power of Pat that convinced me that I should join in with this epic walk, as if I ever had a choice. The idea that Mary had, was to stage a relay journey involving walkers, cyclists, canoeists and horse riders who would travel down the length of England, starting from Lancaster Castle and passing through all the land and houses owned by the Duchy of Lancaster.

Our team, representing the walkers, were allocated sections of the route previously planned but checked and mapped by Pat in her meticulous way. Each group carried a relay baton, emblazoned with the red rose representing the House of Lancaster. At the end of our section the baton would be passed over to a cyclist, horse rider or canoeist who continued on with the journey.

Pat's father was also roped into this epic journey, for he became the support driver, who would transport us onto the next sections allocated to walkers. Our overnight accommodation comprised of humble homes to Stately homes, from school halls to church halls, in places associated or owned by the Duchy. At each stopover place the participants were presented with a memorial badge as a reminder of the occasion. The accommodations at times were basic to say the least and on other occasions we stayed at the home of friends of Mary Towneley.

After a week walking, we did eventually arrive in London, our final leg of the walk where we stopped overnight in a large country house. The next day we would be transported by the owner to Windsor Great Park, in a very flashy Silver Cloud Rolls Royce. I remember Pat enjoying that ride and waved like the Queen as we rolled silently along. Once in the Park all the different groups that had been involved in the various stages of this celebration relay event were lined up and presented to the Queen.

Although this walk was 45 years ago I still have a lasting memory of the day we met the Queen.

In memory of Pat Parrott who died recently.

Michael C

More Questioned Answered

Once again on the last SVRC walk undertaken on Saturday 27th August to the Yorkshire Dales Norber Stones lots of questions were raised. Who was Robin Proctor? Why is Thieves Moss so called? Why is it shaped like an amphitheatre? What is the story behind Beggars's Stile? I will attempt to answer some of these questions.

Firstly, the easy one, Robin Proctor of Robin Proctor's Scar fame.

Norber Scar (as this was the area's original name) lies close to Austwick and Crummackdale. According to local legend Mr. Proctor was a Crummackdale farmer, who tended to fall asleep on his horse on the way home from the local hostelry!! His horse knew the way and got him home safely. However, so the story goes, one night Mr Proctor, in his inebriated state, took the wrong horse from the inn's stables and as it was a dark, misty night the horse unaware of its surroundings, wandered off the cliff killing them both. Poor horse. Don't drink and ride!



Robin Proctor Scar above Clapham North Yorkshire



Malham Cove is acclaimed to be the most spectacular example of a limestone pavement in the Yorkshire Dales and while I don't wish to detract from Malham there is another equally awesome example. This landscape is not as accessible as it's more illustrious cousin but Moughton Scars is no less impressive and the view looking over the Scars from Long Scar with Pen-y-ghent in the distance is without doubt one of the most beautiful natural sights in the whole of the Yorkshire Dales. Moughton Scars are larger in area than Malham Cove and simply tempt you to take a closer look. They lie close to the village of Austwick above Crummackdale.



The Moughton escarpment overlooking Thieves' Moss

Thieves' Moss is the boggy area of flat land and limestone pavement which lies below the main plateau of Moughton. Formed by the scouring effect of a glacial ice sheet, it is claimed that Thieves' Moss was once used as an arena for the sale of stolen livestock by sheep and cattle rustlers (hence the name). Situated within an elevated natural amphitheatre above Moughton Scar the site is hidden from view from the valley below, and so this theory certainly sounds plausible. Thieves' Moss is overlooked by Sulber Gate and the cliffs of Moughton Scar. At the bottom end of Thieves' Moss is the Beggar's Stile

Beggar's Stile Try as I might I cannot find any local stories etc about how or why this stile is known as Beggar's Stile. Perhaps it may have something to do with the area known as Thieves Moss – but that is purely my supposition.



Jane C

The Style of Stiles

While out walking we come across a great variety of methods to cross barriers that farmers and landowners have constructed to prevent animals from escaping from their fields.

The simple pedestrian gate.

These sometimes have a long, spring-loaded arm attached to the latch so that horse riders can open the gate without dismounting.



The Step Stile

The most common way to cross a fence line and usually of wooden construction, sometimes with a helpful hatch at ground level for dogs.



The Kissing gate. This is a gate that swings freely across a V-shaped or D-shaped opening in the fence, just 'kissing' the post on either side. Easy for humans, but tricky for cattle. There is another theory behind the name, but I am not sure you would want to kiss your fellow walkers as you pass through the gate.

The Squeeze Stile a narrow gap lined by two stone slabs or posts, sometimes v-shaped and sometimes with a small gate. More complex versions may have sides that can be pushed apart to widen the gap.



The stone stile Often found in the Yorkshire Dales and is made from large slabs cantilevered on both sides of a stone wall. This type needs to be climbed with care as sometimes one of the slabs is broken and the way down, precarious.



A variation of the **stone step stile**, because sheep can be good at climbing, is to introduce a small gate on the top. The gate can be spring loaded using a variety of inventive means, from a metal spring to an old strip of inner tube. Some of these spring can be quite strong and can propel you off the top.

These examples portray the best of what is actually out there and the ones you will encounter will vary tremendously not just in adaptation and ingenuity, but also their state of repair. Many stones will be loose and wooden steps rotten or missing. Always take care when negotiating these barriers.

Michael C

Yorkshire Dales over Time

The word “Dales” comes from a Norse word for valley. The rocks that dominate the landscape consisting of limestone, shale, sandstones and millstone grit were laid down as marine sediments in a period beginning about 350 million years ago. Much older rocks survive in the Howgill Fells where erosion has produced a distinct and dramatic landscape of smooth, rounded hills and steep-sided valleys.

All of the Yorkshire Dales, with the exception of some of the higher peaks, was covered with ice during the last Ice Age. Once the ice sheets had melted and the climate began to warm, the landscape of the Yorkshire Dales gradually changed from open tundra to dense woodland. The people of this time (8000 BC) were hunter-gatherers, and evidence shows that open land around water sources such as Malham Tarn and Semerwater were important hunting areas. The first farmers appeared sometime after 5000 BC, clearing woodland to provide grazing for sheep, goats and cattle and somewhere to plant cereal crops. Evidence of these farms appear in the upper reaches of Crummackdale

The Roman invasion of AD 43 brought great changes to the economy and society of a large part of Britain. In the Dales there is evidence of a marching camp on Malham Moor and a permanent fort at Bainbridge linked to other sites by a typical straight road across the hills. However, Roman influence never seems to have penetrated very far into the Dales. Life for the mass of the native population probably went on much as it had done for their ancestors, and this way of life would have continued after the Romans left in AD 410.

The next invasions came from northern Europe – with Saxon and Viking warrior-farmers coming to the area from Denmark and Norway. This Anglo-Scandinavian period continued through to the Norman invasion of 1066. The opposition to the rule of the Norman Duke William by northern landowners, led to a dreadful revenge called the Harrying of the North where estates were burned and crops and stock destroyed. In order to maintain control over their new territories, William’s landlords built stone castles such as those at Skipton, Middleham and Richmond. Once settled, the Norman lords gradually began to give away their least profitable lands to the church in return for intercession in the next life.

As a result, the great monastic houses like Fountains Abbey and Bolton Priory came to own three-quarters of the land defined by the boundary of the National Park.

One of the greatest changes to take place in the countryside came about after 1539 with the Dissolution of the monasteries. The huge monastic granges were broken up and a new class of tenant came to be established.

During the seventeenth century, the yeomen farmers of the Yorkshire Dales increased their fortunes and land holdings, usually at the expense of a growing class of landless poor. Further wealth plus work for the poor, was created through the manufacture of knitted textiles and the exploitation of mineral resources, such as lead and coal.

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Industrial Revolution swept through the Yorkshire Dales. Small communities were transformed by the arrival of cotton and wool processing mills. Mineral resources such as lead and coal were exploited as never before. Canals and better roads meant that farmers no longer needed to grow their own corn and during the eighteenth century more and more farmland was given over to grazing cattle and sheep. The numerous stone field barns of the Dales mostly date to this period.

By the end of the nineteenth century, both the lead and the coal industries were nearing their end along with nearly all the textile mills. Farming continued as the backbone of the Dales’ economy, but the early 1900s saw the beginnings of a rival - tourism. Back then, rambling became a popular leisure activity with urban workers yearning for the peace and quiet of the hills.



SVRC walking in the Yorkshire Dales

Eleanor

Eat your Shoes

For all walkers the three items of clothing vital in order to achieve a memorable day and you can just enjoy yourself are appropriate outdoor jackets and trousers, cozy socks and comfortable well-fitting shoes.

Arguably the most important of these are the shoes because if you are having trouble with your feet you will soon be using that well known phrase I'll just have to "eat my shoes".

But has anyone ever eaten their own shoes? I am pleased to be able to give you the following examples of just such events - not necessarily regarding walkers but just as amusing!

The first is the ballerina Marie Taglioni who after her final ballet in Russia in 1842, when her fans in St Petersburg raised 200 roubles for her dancing slippers, cooked them up and ate them with a special sauce!



The second is in a 22 minute film titled "Werner Herzog eats his Shoe" when the film director had to do just that after he had unwisely, as it happens, told his student that "if a successful documentary on pet cemeteries was ever made he would eat his shoe". When his student made and presented the film, Herzog had to do just that. He sautéed the shoe in garlic and spices and ate it in front of an audience where it was filmed!



An American broadcaster vowed to eat his shoes if the book Living History by Hillary Clinton sold more than one million copies. He kept to his word but said "I'm going for slip-ons, nothing with laces". Well known Manhattan chefs offered to cook them with suggestions which included deep fried sole and lace linguine, sweat and sour sauce and followed by Tiramishoe.

In the film "The Gold Rush", Charlie Chaplin played a lone prospector who travelled to Alaska to dig for gold. On Thanksgiving Day due to starvation, he was forced to boil and eat his boot. He produced a five-star feast and he carved and filleted it then poured a watery gravy over it. The sole was treated as a delicacy, the laces were twirled like spaghetti and nails were sucked like chicken bones. All the audiences laughed.



My last example was provided by an installation artist, Yu Xiuzhen, in 1996 who participated in an exhibition in Tibet which included pairs of shoes arranged all over a hillside and each one filled with butter!

Perhaps these examples were not quite what you were expecting when you first started to read about walkers boots or shoes but I do hope that they gave you a little pleasure with ideas as to what you could have done! If, however, it hasn't tempted you with new and exciting ideas to consider then I suggest that if you do have any old sturdy walking shoes or boots and can't think what to do with them, then just fill with soil and plant up with nice flowers or vegetable. Another way to eat out of your boots, but not the boots themselves. Good luck and enjoy.

Glenda B