

Ramblers Gems



A Spring Vale Rambling Class Publication

Volume 3 Issue 4

28th January 2022

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Bird Watch

This is the weekend for the RSPB Big Garden Bird watch and taking part just couldn't be simpler. All you need to do over the next two days is:

1. Watch the birds around you for one hour.
2. Count how many of each species of bird lands on your patch.
3. Go online at <https://www.rspb.org.uk> and tell the society what you saw.



It is important that the bird population is monitored and involving the public in this way provides a snapshot year on year of the trends, both good and bad. The UK Red List for Birds keeps track of population trends in 245 species, with birds listed as 'Red' deemed most at risk. In 2021, greenfinches moved onto the Red list for the first time.

Back in 1979, when the Big Garden Birdwatch began, greenfinches came in at number eight, but this year, they were down at 19. This echoes the devastating population declines seen in these charming little finches, with the cause thought to be a disease called trichomonosis. It's also possible that chaffinches and house sparrows may be affected.

More birds than ever before were placed on the Red list of greatest conservation concern in the latest report, published in 2021. At 70 species long, the Red list is nearly double the length of the one in the first report in 1996, showing that even more of our birds are in trouble.

The swift, house martin and greenfinch all moved onto the Red list because of population declines, joining other well-known birds such as puffins and cuckoos.

More birds that migrate to Africa for the winter seem to be faring less well, while there has been no improvement in the status of farmland or upland birds; indeed, more of these species have been Red listed. Waterbirds that spend the winter in the UK have declined in numbers, resulting in the goldeneye, smew, Bewick's swan and dunlin all moving to the Red list. But it's not all bad news: dedicated conservation action has helped the white-tailed eagle move from Red to Amber.

Michael C

The Magical Rowan

The Rowan tree is the ruler of the 2nd Lunar month and represented by the Ogham letter L (Luis). The lunar month is 21st January to the 17th February. The powers of the Rowan are healing, success and power, protection and psychic intuition.

It is sacred for the ancient Druid cults as Li sula, 'delight of the eye' and Luis, the quicken tree. In its ruling time at the beginning of February, falls one of the four great pagan sabbats of the year – Imbolc (Feb 1st), or Candlemas (Feb 2nd) in the Christian almanac.



Imbolc or Imbolg, also called Saint Brigid's Day, is a Gaelic traditional festival. It marks the beginning of spring, and for Christians it is the feast day of Saint Brigid. Imbolc symbolizes the halfway point between the winter solstice (Yule) and the spring equinox (Ostara). The word "imbolc" means "in the belly of the Mother," because the seeds of spring are beginning to stir in the belly of Mother Earth.

On Candlemas Day, February 2, followers of Jesus celebrate his Presentation at the Temple and the Virgin Mary being purified, with many of the faithful bringing candles to their churches to be blessed. Candlemas is traditionally the 40th day of and the conclusion of the Christmas–Epiphany season.



The name 'Rowan' may have been passed down from the old Norse name for the tree 'Runa' which means a charm, or the Swedish 'Roon' for red. As well as being known as the Mountain Ash, its folk names are many

Quickenwood, Quickbane, Sorbapple, Witchenwood, Rune Tree, Witchbane and Whitty Tree being but a few!

It's a true native of Wales and Scotland and can withstand poor soil and icy temperatures. The rowan loves light and space, and as it is a small, fairly short-lived tree, not reaching much above 15 metres it doesn't grow in the old woodlands or forests where it would be overshadowed by the oaks and pines. It is a popular choice in modern urban settings, parks and open roadsides. The Rowan has pretty creamy-white clusters of flowers in May, whose sweet scent attracts plenty of bees and other pollinating insects.



Large bunches of brilliantly bright, red or orange berries hang down from late August. They can be made into a jelly, often mixed with apple or crab-apples,

The berries are stripped with relish in towns and gardens by blackbirds and chaffinches, who then disperse the seeds in their droppings.

The wood is prized by contemporary wood carvers and turners for its fine grain, and crafted into bowls, platters and stemmed cups. It was the traditional wood for spinning wheels, spindles and makes a fine walking stick.

Rowan wood was used in the making of farm tool handles, wheel-spokes and animal yokes, where it was considered to offer protection from witchcraft. The scarlet Rowan berries are high in Vitamin C content.

Named the Wizard Tree, the Rowan was known to be sacred to many cultures. The tree, known as the Quicken Tree – the Tree of Life, with its scarlet berries like living drops of blood was proof to the ancestors of its life-force and mighty powers of protection. One Norse legend associates Rowan with the great god Thor. In spite of its being the Tree of Life and Quickening, it was thought that a spike of rowan could be driven into a corpse to keep the soul from walking!

Jean G

Green is the Colour

There is one small 5 letter word which connects the following. Islands and mainland, manicured gardens and moorland, summer and winter, land and sky, villages and backyards, coastline and highland. What could it be you ask yourself? The answer is the colourGREEN.

Wherever you go on your walk you will take it for granted because it is all around us and is in most spaces and helps us to feel relaxed. Parklands, moorlands, quiet forests or headlands alike. Surrounded by any shade of green will leave us feeling calm with the lighter shades leaving us chilled out, with a sense of stability and growth rather than the brighter shades which leave us more excited, full of hope, and with a feeling of freshness and springlike.

When you look in the distance across any views you will just see green but just how many greens are there? The answer is that there are an infinite number of shades and variations due to the many hues. Some have been lucky enough to have their own name - Forest, Lime, Olive, Cyan, Chartreuse, Teal, Viridian, Jungle, Sage, Sap to name a few but many haven't. It is an extremely flexible colour. People always associate it with a soothing and comforting setting and always with nature and the outdoors.

So where can you go to spot unusual offerings of "green spaces"? Alnwick Castle, Northumberland gives us large areas of grassland sweeping down to the river with huge banks of daffodils in spring and the Castle's Poison Garden with nightshade, mandrake and hemlock being an unusual choice.



Alnwick Castle

The 16th Century Crathes Castle at Banchory, Scotland gives us eight gardens including yew hedges dating back to the early 1700's and even offers us it's own resident ghost. Vibrant with many colours of green offering hiding places to buzzard and deer alike.

If you are looking for somewhere remote where the green of the valley meets the rolling hills with Roman history thrown in as an extra and a historic Well or Wald path then Durisdeer, Dumfries and Galloway is an option. The category A listed parish church and its impressive Queensberry Aisle is also worth investigating.

But back to Green. Colours also have slightly different meanings across the world. In the Eastern world green stands for eternity, family, harmony, as well as peace, health and posterity.

The psychology of colour is very well understood and extensively used by marketeers and the promotion industry alike to persuade us to buy. Sometimes, colour plays an important role in people's choice when buying something. In fact 85% of people have said that colour was the primary reason when they made a purchase. Starbucks use greens on their logo for growth, freshness, uniqueness and prosperity utilising a different green in store to promote relaxation. John Deere use green to remind us of fresh cut grass with the yellow representing harvest ready fields and corn. BP company use yellow on a stylised sunflower and a bright green to support their brand showing an environmental sensitivity.

Different groups of individuals use green in a specific way to suit their settings. Theatres and TV, recording studios alike refer to waiting in the "green room" before going on to perform or before camera. Doctors use a green room to help patients feel at ease. Using green encourages a balance in your brain to lead to decisiveness when decisions need to be made.

So, what are the personality strengths of individuals with an identified green bias? You will be perfectionistic, analytical, conceptual in approach, cool, calm, inventive, and logical. You will seek knowledge and understanding always looking for explanations and answers. You will take time to concentrate in order to give correct answers. Whether you recognise these traits in yourself or not we can all benefit greatly from just appreciating and enjoying all things green.

Have fun.

Glenda B

Rambling on Coalfields

You might not always realise it but many SVRC walks are very often close to Lancashire coalfields. The walk from Padiham on 22nd January was one such occasion.

The Burnley Coalfield is the most northerly portion of the Lancashire Coalfield surrounding Burnley, Nelson, Blackburn and Accrington. It is separated from the larger southern part by an area of Millstone Grit that forms the Rossendale anticline (*a ridge or fold of stratified rock in which the strata slope downwards from the crest*). Occupying a syncline where bed rocks dip toward each other from either side, it stretches from Blackburn past Colne to the Yorkshire border. Around the district, 19 coal seams, of varying thickness were exploited over time. Seams were generally less than 1.5 metres in thickness, frequently less.

The coal industry grew in the 16th and 17th centuries, developing from manorial tenants who dug coal for their own use into fixed term leases in return for rent. Coal was mined all around Burnley, mostly from shafts.

The arrival of the Leeds and Liverpool Canal was a catalyst for industrialisation as was the coming of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway line. Tramways came into common use in the 1880s and several collieries were linked by a tramway system to the canal for the transportation of coal.



Gannow Tunnel on the Leeds Liverpool Canal

Several collieries were nationalised under the Coal Industry Nationalisation Act 1946 on vesting day, 1 January 1947. After the 1950s much of the area was opencast surface mining. Coal was opencast at Gawthorpe Hall and Tipping Hill.

On 22nd January we walked from Padiham Greenway along the canal to Gannow Tunnel near **Gannow Colliery** which was linked to a coal staithe by a tramroad. Later we walked through Tipping Hill in Gawthorpe Hall grounds. Tipping Hill Wood / Plantation has courtesy paths, and the site shows signs of old stone structures. However, the drystone wall near the stile entrance to Tipping Hill Wood was design by Phil Cobb. It was built for the disabled to have access to a viewing point at the top of Tipping Hill Wood. This project was funded by the National Lottery, to rebuild the boundary wall around the wood for the National Trust.



Approaching Gawthorpe Hall (photo from Anita D)

In the Accrington area as a Club we have walked on or nearby coalfields - at the 'fairy caves' Aspen colliery Oswaldtwistle; Baxenden colliery at Woodnook Vale; Broadfield colliery near Foxhalls Bank Nature Reserve; Dunkenhagh Park Colliery along the tramway to the canal half-way point at Church Kirk; Huncoat Colliery near to Calder and Scaitcliffe Collieries.

The Moorfield Colliery, next to the canal in Altham, was where on 7 November 1883 an underground explosion killed 68 miners, including 13 boys and the colliery manager. The Martholme Colliery, near the old hall and Martholme railway viaduct, connected Bridge Hey Colliery, the River Calder and Great Harwood Colliery known as Park Pit.

Rishton Colliery had a ginny road from the pit connecting it to a coaling wharf on the canal. Scaitcliffe Colliery was near to Howard and Bullough's Globe Works, while the Sough Lane Colliery had a tramroad connecting it to Knuzden. The old coal industry is all around. you just need to know where to look.

Barbara S

OS Questions

When looking on an OS map whilst working out your route, have you ever asked yourself any of the following questions and then found the answer?

What are shake holes?

These are steep-sided holes, or funnel shaped dips in the ground that appear on some OS maps since they are considered hazardous. Often found in areas where porous limestone forms the base rock, they occur when soil at the surface is drawn into holes underground.

What's the difference between a hamlet, a village and a town?

A hamlet is usually defined as a small, isolated group of houses without a church. A village, on the other hand, must always have a church but has an area of less than one square mile. A town is a centre both of population and business with an area greater than 2.5 square kilometres, although smaller communities are sometimes traditionally described as towns (as in the case of market towns or county towns).

What's the difference between hills and mountains?

There is no international classification of mountains, and the Ordnance Survey does not use one, but in its literature tries to adhere to local nomenclature. In England, Wales and Ireland, the minimum height is generally agreed to be 2000 feet.

But two further views hold that every summit above this height should be designated a mountain, or that a mountain should have a distinct summit or peak.



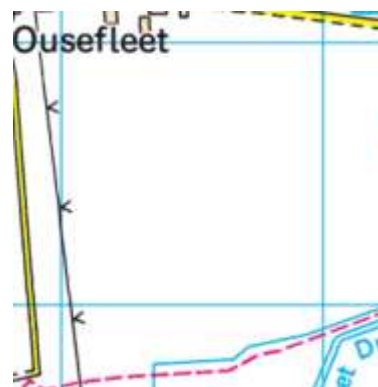
Great Gable 899 M 2945 ft

According to the first classification, therefore, Kinder Scout (636m) in the Peak District National Park would be defined as a mountain. According to the second school of thought, it should be considered as high moorland since it has no obvious summit.

A further qualification might well be needed, a mountain must lie north of 51 degrees in order to account for Yes Tor and High Willhays on Dartmoor. They are both higher than 2000 feet and have peaks but are never classified as mountains.

Where is the emptiest square on an OS map?

In fact, there are no completely empty squares on 1:25,000 or 1:50,000 scale OS maps of Great Britain. The grid square with the least amount of detail is at SE 8322 on OS Landranger map 112 (Scarborough and Gainsborough sheet). The only feature in the field that appears in this square is the line of a pylon.



OS Map Square
SE 8322

Where is the furthest point in Great Britain from a metalled road?

The A832 is 11km, or seven miles, away from the hillside of Ruadh Stac Beag between Letterwe Forest and Fisherfield Forest in Wester Ross, Highland, Scotland (NH 025770)

These are just a few of the questions that spring to mind. See if you can find more interesting facts and share them with your walking friends.



Pendle Hill 395 M 1296 ft

Eleanor