

Ramblers Gems



A Spring Vale Rambling Class Publication

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Our Woods

The founder and first chairman of the Woodland Trust Kenneth Watkin OBE was so concerned about loss of ancient woodland, that he decided to do something about it. He created the Woodland Trust, a charity to protect our trees and much more. Now the Trust stand up for trees as the UK's largest woodland conservation charity having over 500,000 members and supporters and own more than 1,000 woods which are free to visit at any time.

The Woodland Trust create havens for wildlife by planting millions of trees every year, campaign for new laws to protect ancient woodland and restore damaged ancient woods so they can breathe again. Our woodland cover is gradually increasing, but the wildlife within is decreasing. The trends for the UK's woods and trees are becoming a concern. The UK's woodland cover has more than doubled in the last 100 years, but much of this is non-native trees. Existing native woodlands are isolated, in poor ecological condition and there has been a decline in woodland wildlife.

Woods owned and managed by the Woodland Trust in our area include the following two.

E Wood, Cravens Brow Lower Darwen

Located in the heart of Blackburn E Wood provides a wildlife haven in the middle of an urban area. This wood is on two levels the higher dominated by mature broadleaf trees the lower by young broadleaves. A popular location with locals, a small stream known locally as the 'Mill Race' meanders through the site flowing at a slow and steady pace. The woodland is home for many creatures such as foxes, woodpeckers and owls.

Polyphemus Wood, Knowle Fold Darwen

Created in 2005 to mark the bicentenary of the Battle of Trafalgar and named after one of Nelson's fleet this broadleaf woodland with 15000 trees includes oak, ash, alder, birch, rowan, hazel, hawthorn and holly. A variety of flora has also been encouraged by deep ploughing and seeding open areas to provide a visual display.

There are many other areas for trees in our locality and now is the time to time to visit them, in all their Autumn glory.



Eleanor

Area 51

During the recent SVRC walk at Belmont and Spittle's Edge, while I was browsing the geocache website at our lunch spot, I discovered a geocache called "Area 51". It sounded intriguing; allegedly according to "The Winter Hill Investigation Team", on Saturday 13th November 1999, the Manchester Paranormal Investigation Team (MaPIT) received a telephone call from a very stressed sounding gentleman claiming to be called Mr Murphy and working on a local farm (not named). He went on to claim that he was working late and saw huge bright light over the farm. The light moved over the fields and then moved off. He ran to check the cattle and then the light turned and headed back towards him. Mr. Murphy(?) also claimed he was visited by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and asked to stop talking about the incident. The Government agency deny this. His claims were investigated at a later date and no substantial evidence was found – the farm couldn't be found – all farms in the area were contacted and visited, none fitted the bill and no one had a worker call Murphy.



However there are numerous incidents surrounding Rivington, Winter Hill and their environs.

The website www.anglefire.com written by a local Rivingtonian, comments on reported strange sightings, and the author reports seeing such sightings himself although does not consider them "alien". Many will have connections to the nearby air bases, and with the significant advancements in drone development, and experimental unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) this may explain what is seen flying around Rivington and Winter Hill.

True or False You decide.

Jane C

Autumns Glory

by Benita Moore

On a glorious golden autumnal day
The trees were whispering gold,
As leaves cascaded, tumbling down
By cool orchard's wall – grey and old.
Virginia creeper thronged cottage walls
Rose-hips shone in their scarlet glory,
Eager children sought chestnuts ripe -
Repeating wild Autumn's glad story.
Sycamores crimsoned by October mists
Saluted Nature's bright array
Sturdy oaks, mellowed by sunshine and rain
Glowed sublime by the turn of mid-day.
Spiders' webs, caught by the morning dew
Glistening and vibrantly gleaming.
Cottage doors shining with cleanliness too
Thrown open to morning sun streaming.
Yes, these are the sights and the sounds Autumn brings
The end of the year Nature's voicing.
Let us stroll and enjoy Autumn's treasures so rich
And go into winter rejoicing.



Pesto Cenorr

Panto Fun Night

The tickets for this incredible show are selling fast so now is the time to get yours before they all get sold.

Got kids or grandkids to entertain, or you are just a big kid at heart??

Why not have a night (or afternoon matinee) out at the pantomime..... St Cuthbert's Amateur Dramatic Society, Darwen are busy rehearsing this year's offering.....Aladdin. Your very own **Jane Cordingley** is playing a little known character from Aladdin – that of Moira Wong!! She is Widow Twankey's sister and runs the local take away with her sister Madge. When the sisters leave Twankey in charge of the chippy, chaos ensues.

Tickets available online <https://www.darwenscads.org>

Please mention Spring Vale Rambling Class when booking – then you can get a name check on the night.

Straight from the classic “Arabian Nights”, with a slight detour along the way, Aladdin tells the story of a poor, lovestruck boy who longs to be with Princess Jasmine.

Meanwhile the evil Abanazar wants to be the most powerful sorcerer in the world and plans to use Aladdin for his evil schemes!

Meet Aladdin, Wishee Washee, and Widow Twankey as they try to stop Abanazar and his henchman, Abizmal, from stealing a magic lamp with a secret inside.

Will the evil Abanazar manage to claim the lamp for himself?

Will Aladdin win the heart of the Princess?

Will Widow Twankey finish all her laundry?



What would you wish for?

Find out in Aladdin - the new family-friendly pantomime from St Cuthbert's Amateur Dramatic Society.

Performances run nightly from Tuesday 15th November to Saturday 19th November, beginning at 7:30pm prompt. There will be a matinee performance on Saturday 19th November, beginning at 2:15pm prompt. Refreshments will be available each performance with drinks, confectionery and ice cream supplied by Mrs Dowson's.

This year's raffle will be raising funds for both St. Cuthbert's Church and Darwen Food Larder. Our takings from Friday's raffle will be donated in full to the Food Larder and we will have donation boxes out at the end of every performance, inviting you to make a monetary donation or add food/household items to be donated to the Food Larder.

“This is me”



“O No it isn't”

“O Yes it is”

Jane C

Tales from the Woods

As we quickly approach the day known as Halloween, the eve of All Saints' Day, 31st October. I have been researching to discover unexplained happenings.

A legend that has a tragic ending within the Roddlesworth Plantations at Tockholes, was relayed by an old gentleman who lived in the area. He told his story, and it is recorded in a short pamphlet entitled "The Wishing Well a moorland romance by a Moorland Lad" written in 1948.

The story goes "One of the daughters of the Hollinshead family, who lived at the old Hall, became enamoured by a youth who lived at the lower end of the Roddlesworth valley. She used to meet him clandestinely and when she set out to meet him she always took with her an old collie, named Nell, on the pretence that she was taking it for a walk.

Her father became suspicious of these constant walks and made certain enquiries and after that he kept a careful watch on his daughter only to discover what was happening. One evening, after one of these walks he was waiting for her return, he asked her where she had been "Oh!" she replied, "I have been with Nell". "You will go with Nell no more" he replied, and in his temper, he took the old dog out into the woods and destroyed it. The young man finding his ladylove came no more to meet him became despondent and hanged himself on a tree close to the place where they met. The place where they met has been called Withnell ever since.



When the daughter heard of the fate of her lover and her favourite dog she began to fret and eventually pinned away and died. She was her father's favourite daughter, and her death affected him so much that, although he lived to a good old age he never smiled again.

At the lower end of the Roddlesworth Valley there is a place known as Engine Bottoms; at this place before the reservoirs were constructed, the River Roddlesworth ran its uninterrupted course. It was spanned here by an old stone bridge and it was on this bridge that the lovers would meet. That particular bridge was washed away over a hundred years ago and it was replaced by a single plank bridge with a single handrail. That bridge became derelict with the passing of the years, and about forty years ago it was dismantled, and a more modern bridge erected in its place. This bridge still stands today.

It is said that the lovers still meet on this bridge and as of old, the dog Nell sits at one end to warn them of the approach of any other person. That is the reason given as to why anyone approaching the bridge from either end has never seen them. Thousands of people cross the bridge over a season, but no one has ever claimed to have seen them. There is a cottage that stands close, where the former tenants, claim to have seen the couple on a clear moonlight night. Old Nell still sitting at one end ready to warn her mistress of any danger".

What truth there is in this legend I leave to your own judgement. You must form your own opinions I only state what the old man told me".

ED

I am not sure where the exact location of the bridge referred to in this article is situated. I have found on the 1848 6 inch to the mile OS map of the Tockholes area a reference to an Engine House and bridge near to Red Lee Farm.



Extract from 6 inch to mile 1848 Map of Tockholes

Michael C

Parks of Note

For my fourth article in this series, I wanted to find a local park that had retained elements of the reasoning behind why it was set up originally and that is where Corporation Park Blackburn comes in.

Set in the centre of Blackburn although before the park was established this was farmland that had to be purchased. It was designed and developed as a hybrid park that wasn't just formal or woodland but also contained areas that encouraged people to come along and take part in activities that would help to develop physical, cultural and "academic" skills of individuals.

Those facilities are still in evidence today.

When you first enter through the historic gateway stretching between the two original lodges at the main entrance, you notice the Borough's Arms which appear on either side of this entrance. The main archway was for horse drawn carriages in Victorian times with the side arches being for pedestrians.



Lakes and fountains are in evidence as you wander through the formal area with its remembrance plaques and engraved dedications. The Italianate area follows with waterfalls, large trees and stone fountains. The large water feature known as the "Big Can" was created from a reservoir at Pemberton Clough and was connected to the town's water supply. People were charged a penny per bucketful. The smaller lake or "the can" allowed people to take a can to that lake to draw water.

One level of parklands contains the Broad Walk which was originally designed and built by unemployed weavers in 1863 during the cotton famine. Used by young men and women mainly on a Sunday between 3:00 and 4:30 it became the "done thing" for large groups to promenade along its length on this main axis below the row of magnificent lime trees.



To the west of this area lies the most renowned feature of Corporation Park the Victorian Conservatory or Glasshouse although today it is extremely sad to see it in its dilapidated state. The banana trees are still in evidence pushing out the glass panels but the metalwork will require a large amount of money to bring it back to its former glory. People in Blackburn will have many tales to tell of seeing unusual plants, going inside to see bananas growing or just going in to draw the wonderful plants not seen before! And in the background you can hear the budgerigars and the cockatiels in the aviary next door.



On the next level you can find the bowling greens, the old tennis courts now used no longer, children's playgrounds and a cycle way where you can teach your children how to ride their cycles safely - all tucked away in the bushes and rocky outcrops.

And topping all of these unusual highlights at the most northerly edge of the park, you will find "Colourfields" which is a Panopticon that was installed on the site of the battery that once displayed two Russian cannons captured during the Crimean war but sold for scrap during WW2.

This park is still a very well used facility and offers attractions including fairgrounds with their bright lights and music and is enjoyed by young and old alike. Let's us hope that it can soon offer its original features such as the Conservatory once again.

Glenda B