

Ramblers Gems



A Spring Vale Rambling Class Publication

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Jack Frost is all around

We are currently suffering some extremely cold weather that is coming down from the Arctic on that northerly wind. The snow has not appeared here yet, but we are experiencing a hard morning frost that only disappears if and when the sun falls upon it. But what is frost? Frost occurs when the temperature of the air in contact with the ground is below the freezing-point of water ('ground frost' or 'air frost', respectively).

There are several different types of frost?

Ground frost A ground frost refers to the formation of ice on the ground, objects or trees, whose surface have a temperature below the freezing point of water. During situations when the ground cools quicker than the air, a ground frost can occur without an air frost. A grass frost, an un-official type of ground frost, can occur when other surfaces - such as concrete or road surfaces - don't experience a frost, due to their better ability at holding onto any warmth. It is possible for a grass frost to occur in late spring or even early summer when the risk of more wide-spread frosts has disappeared.

Air frost An air frost occurs when the air temperature falls to or below the freezing point of water. An air frost is usually defined as the air temperature being below freezing point of water at a height of at least one metre above the ground.

Hoar frost Hoar frost is composed of tiny ice crystals and is formed by the same process as dew, but when the temperature of the surface is below freezing point. The 'feathery' variety of hoar frost forms when the surface temperature reaches freezing point before dew begins to form on it. A 'white' frost, composed of more globular ice, occurs when the dew forms first, then subsequently freezes. The presence of fog tends to prevent the formation of hoar frost as it reduces the potential for radiational cooling of surfaces.

It is the Hoar Frost that we are experiencing at the moment and if you venture out in the early morning or into areas where the sun is late to fall on, then you are in line to see some amazing ice formations covering plants and grasses.



Eleanor

Festive Traditions

It's that time of year for jumpers, hats, socks, jokes, music and party games so here is a **QUIZ** for the 31 days of December.

Just print off this list of questions and ask everyone during your Christmas Day festivities. You can determine to prize for the winner.

1. Which country donates the Christmas tree that stands in Trafalgar Square?
2. Who composed the music for the Nutcracker?
3. Which coin is traditionally baked into a Christmas Pudding?
4. What is the name of the boy in the Raymond Briggs story 'The Snowman'?
5. At Christmas what do we use as an alternative name for a chocolate log?
6. Finish the words to this song 'It's Christmas time, mistletoe and.....?'
7. Who was mummy kissing under the mistletoe?
8. Which traditional party item do we have at Christmas?
9. Who was the first British monarch to broadcast a Christmas message?
10. Which famous physicist was born on Christmas Day?
11. From which race did the modern custom of hanging a wreath on your front door at Christmas originate?
12. What name was given to 'spiced porridge' prior to the invention of a Christmas pudding?
13. What do reindeers eat?
14. Which band had a hit single with 'Last Christmas'?
15. In what year was the first postage stamp issued to commemorate Christmas in England?
16. Which phrase is associated with the Three Kings in the Nativity story?
17. Humphrey Bogart was born on Christmas day in what year?
18. Who wrote 'A Christmas Carol'?
19. What is the French for 'Merry Christmas'?
20. On which day should you take all your decorations down?
21. What is the ten lords a leaping meant to represent in the song 'The Twelve Days of Christmas'?
22. In which year did the setting of flames on a Christmas pudding date back to?
23. Who did a duet with David Bowie of 'The Little Drummer Boy'?
24. According to druidic tradition, what did Mistletoe have to be cut with?
25. What traditional Christmas dinner was eaten in early England?
26. What do the four calling birds represent in the song 'The Twelve Days of Christmas'?
27. Where is Christmas Island?
28. The first collection of English carols was published in?
29. How fast can reindeer run?
30. Complete the last line 'Last Christmas...?'
31. According to the song, 'All I want for Christmas is'...?'

The answers will appear in next weeks edition.

Barbara S

Winter

by *Walter de la Mare*

Clouded with snow
The cold winds blow,
And shrill on leafless bough
The robin with its burning breast
Alone sings now.

The rayless sun,
Day's journey done,
Sheds its last ebbing light
On fields in leagues of beauty spread
Unearthly white.

Thick draws the dark,
And spark by spark,
The frost-fires kindle, and soon
Over that sea of frozen foam
Floats the white moon.

Snow

by *Walter de la Mare*

No breath of wind,
No gleam of sun –
Still the white snow
Whirls softly down
Twig and bough
And blade and thorn
All in an icy
Quiet, forlorn.
Whispering, rustling,
Through the air
On still and stone,
Roof, - everywhere,
It heaps its powdery
Crystal flakes,
Of every tree
A mountain makes;
'Til pale and faint
At shut of day
Stoops from the West
One wint'ry ray,
And, feathered in fire
Where ghosts the moon,
A robin shrills
His lonely tune.

Submitted by *Pesto Cenorr*

Christmas Evergreens

The holly, ivy and mistletoe are the quintessential Christmas evergreens, and it is believed that all must be handled correctly to avoid ill fortune. They must certainly be removed by 6 January, which is Twelfth Night or the feast of the Epiphany. For their Christmas celebrations, early Christians adapted the traditions of the bawdy Roman midwinter festival of Saturnalia, bringing in evergreens to decorate their homes and churches. Christmas Eve is the most propitious day for cutting greenery; if you use it before this date quarrels are, it is said, sure to ensue.



By old country lore, while the prickly holly (*Ilex sp*) represents the male, the ivy is undoubtedly feminine. The Greeks called it *cissos* after a dancing girl who danced herself to death at the feet of Dionysus and was transformed into the plant by the god, so moved was he by her art. Unlike holly, ivy (*Hedera sp*) is not always welcomed indoors but kept for decorating doorways and porches, 'just in case'. While mistletoe could be brought into the home, it was banned from churches for decoration because of its pagan associations and is still discouraged today.

December Anniversaries

4th Dec Feast of St Barbara, patron saint of anything connected with thunderstorms, fire, gunpowder, sudden loud noises!! BUT not connected with herons.

10th Dec 1960 – first episode of Coronation St

24th Dec 1818 – “Silent Night, Holy Night” sung for first time. Words by Joseph Franz Mohr, a priest, music by Herr Gruber in Oberndorf, Austria

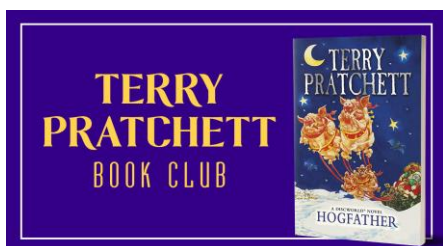
Jane C

An Alternative Tale

For a totally different view of the festive period, try *The Hogfather* by Terry Pratchett. Set in Discworld, the book focuses on the absence of the Hogfather, a mythical creature akin to Father Christmas, who grants children's wishes on Hogswatchnight (December 32) and brings them presents. While Death attempts to fill in for the Hogfather, his granddaughter Susan tries to find and rescue the Hogfather

The Auditors of Reality, a group of "celestial bureaucrats" attempt to eliminate the Hogfather, a jolly god-like creature who brings children presents on December 32nd, similar to the figures of Santa Claus and Christmas in the US and UK. Forbidden to interfere directly by "The Rules", they pay the Assassin's Guild to kill the Hogfather instead. The task is given to Mr. Teatime who has a reputation for ruthlessness and creative solutions. Mr. Teatime enlists the help of some gangsters to find a delivery person working for the Tooth Fairy, using his magic to break into her kingdom and stealing all the collected teeth. With these teeth, he is able to control all the children on the Discworld, commanding them to no longer believe in the Hogfather.

Knowing that the Hogfather is also responsible for the sun rising, Death attempts to maintain belief by dressing up as the Hogfather and fulfilling his role, aided by his servant Albert. Due to Death's simplistic understanding of the meaning of Hogswatch, he commits several acts supposedly to aid restoring belief in the Hogfather but which Albert believes are unacceptable, including granting more life to a deceased matchgirl and stealing food from a luxury restaurant to give to the Canting Crew (whilst replacing said restaurant's stock with mud and old boots). Since he is unable himself to defeat Mr. Teatime, who is in a realm created by children's belief where death (and thus Death) does not exist, he appears at his granddaughter's place of work dressed as the Hogfather.



As he had planned, Susan Sto Helit is unable to resist her curiosity and tries to find the Hogfather. She visits the Hogfather's Castle of Bones, only to find the hung-over Biliious, the "Oh God" of Hangovers. In an attempt to cure Biliious from his hangovers, Susan visits the Unseen University, where it is discovered that several small gods and beings (including Biliious, a Verruca Gnome, a Hair Loss Fairy, an Eater of Pencils, and Eater of Socks, Towel Wasps, and a Cheerful Fairy) are being created due to an abundance of excess belief in the world caused by the Hogfather's disappearance.

Susan and Biliious travel to the Tooth Fairy's realm and discover Mr. Teatime's plot. Mr. Teatime attacks Susan using Death's sword, but since it does not work in this realm, Susan is able to overpower him and throw him down the tower, causing him to disappear. After Susan witnesses the Tooth Fairy (in fact, the original Bogey Man, who became the Tooth Fairy to protect children) die from the exhaustion from defending its kingdom, she tasks the childlike Banjo Lilywhite, the last surviving gangster, to carry on the task of protecting the teeth. She then manages to rescue the Hogfather, who has reverted to his former self as a hog, from Auditors who hound him in the form of attack dogs. As Susan is returning to her place of work, Death explains what happened to Susan but she is attacked by Teatime whom she finally manages to kill using the kitchen poker.

Alternatively, watch the two part TV version from 2006 – it is bound to be on over the Christmas period. Stars David Jason as Death's servant Albert, Marc Warren as Mr Teatime and Michelle Dockery of *Downton* fame, playing Susan and Tony Robinson as a shop keeper. There is a cameo from Sir Terry himself.



Jane C

History All Around

On our last Spring Vale Ramblers walk from Clough Head Car Park off the Grane Road Haslingden, we walked and talked about the history of the area. We all gained a lot of information from the knowledgeable members but some of our questions remained unanswered.

On our return leg we passed the ruins of Ormerod's on Haslingden Grane overlooking the Calf Hey Reservoir. The old farmstead has been demolished down to an acceptable height for health and safety reasons, cleared and preserved so we get to see the layout of the old ground floor rooms. There was an information board showing the past uses of the rooms.

The building was constructed from the local Haslingden Flags back in the 17th Century originally for the locally wealthy Ormerod family who owned several farms within the nearby valley. Several additions were made to the building throughout the 17th Century including larger living area with parlour and a dairy. The last of the family connected with the property was John Ormerod who sold the farm in 1746.



Later the site was occupied by the Kenyon's, a weaving family who added the loomshops to the back of the property with space for up to seven looms. As the rise of the factory system took hold during the Industrial Revolution, the small enterprise could not compete and the family were later to work at Heap Clough Mill. We had passed the ruins of this mill as we walked down from the large stone quarries before our lunch stop.

Life at Ormerods ended at the time of the construction of the reservoirs by the close of the 19th Century due to much of the farmland being submerged and the Bury and Radcliffe Waterworks Company having purchased the surrounding land and terminated the leases on the occupying farms. During the last years of the 19th Century the building was used for keeping livestock and barn storage. The building was partly restored to just above foundation level when the West Pennine Moors Conservation areas were established and used to interpret the historical architecture of the past.

Earlier during our walk, we were close to the row of terraced houses known as Virgin's Row and were told that the obvious origins of this name were derived from the status of the local men working in the nearby quarry. What is little known these days is that the land behind the Row played an important defensive role during WW2, for here was one of the Starfish sites that took shape on Haslingden Grane during the spring of 1940. Starfish was the code name for a secret system deployed to deflect enemy bombers from sensitive military production sites, such as the ROF factories at Blackburn and Chorley.

The site consisted of an underground control room in the field behind Virgin's Row and also in the "marshalling yard" behind the nearby quarry. This consisted of rows of boxes on metal supports and filled with pitch and shavings. The sides were of hessian and the tops were covered by felt to keep out the rain. These were the rail "trucks" and "wagons" and there was a larger box that stood in for a locomotive. Each box had a detonator linked by wire to the control room. If raiders had attacked, say, Blackburn or Accrington, some of the boxes would have been set on fire with the aim of attracting the second wave of bombers, thus deflecting further damage.



It is hoped that by continuing our tradition of not just being a walking club, we have fulfilled the objectives of our founder J T Fielding in providing Historical, Botanical, Scenic and Geological Rambles. These editions of Ramblers Gems have been a means of transferring the knowledge and experience of our leaders and fellow members to a much wider audience than would have been possible just by word of mouth on a ramble. There is now a permanent record of some of the lesser known and forgotten histories, traditions, and folklore of this part of Lancashire. We have also tried to inform members of some of the flora and fauna that is so abundant in our countryside as well as offer a variety of countryside related prose and poems.

Michael C