

Ramblers Gems



A Spring Vale Rambling Class Publication

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 The Legend of the Snowdrop/
February Musings**
- 2 Plan, Prepare and Pioneer**
- 3 A Risk to Life and Limb**
- 4 Walkabout**
- 5 Growth/ Candlemass beliefs and sayings.**

The Legend of the Snowdrop

The snowdrop appears in February, and traditionally is a symbol of hope. According to legend, this connection with hope, lies with Adam and Eve, when they were expelled from the Garden of Eden. Eve was giving up hope that the cold winters would never end, when an angel appeared, transforming snowflakes into snow drops, to show that the winters do end and spring returns again.

The name snowdrop does not mean 'drop' of snow, it means drop as in eardrop, the old word for earring

Snowdrops are also known as Candlemass Bells

The latin name for snowdrop is Galanthus, which means "milk flower"

Jane C

February Musings

February was introduced into the Roman calendar by Numa Pompilius 753 -673 BC, when the calendar was extended from ten to twelve. The word February come from the word "februa" which means cleaning or purification and can be taken to reflect the rituals undertaken before spring.

The Anglo – Saxons called February "Sol-monath" (cake month), because cakes were offered to the gods during this month.

The Welsh call February "y mis bach" – the little month

Candlemass Day is the 2nd of February and marks the midpoint of winter. In pre-Christian times this day was known as the "feast of Lights" and was celebrated to increase the strength of the sun. Some people thought that candles gave protection against plague, illness and famine. The Romans had a custom of lighting candles to scare away evil spirits. In the Christian tradition, this day is also known as the presentation of Jesus in the Temple.



Jane C

Plan, Prepare and Pioneer

All walks leaders are different. We like different things and we plan and pioneer our walks differently.

I pick a location and start by going on-line to look for local walks. Then I open the map and familiarise myself with the surrounding footpaths, tracks and bridleways and the wider environment.

I am not keen on tarmac but roads and lanes are an essential part of planning a ramble mainly to be used after heavy rain or as 'escape' routes. Mud, swollen streams, locked gates, washed away bridges, fallen trees, dangerous stiles and footpath closures are immovable objects to be overcome.

Many pioneer walks are undertaken and whilst almost all can be completed by a couple of like-minded friends a large number are found to be quite unsuitable for large groups of ramblers of mixed experience and ability. Sometimes there is insufficient car parking and there is no alternative available parking due to the remoteness of a location.

Birk Bank car park on *Rigg Lane*, Quernmore is a good example as it is a tiny car park off a single-track lane. The first part of the walk is moderate and comfortable. However, the bit up the ravine, the shooters track, navigating around difficult and large boggy patches and the sprawling heather moorland punctuated by rocky outcrops is a strenuous walk. It is the Forest of Bowland, but you do get to see the Andrew Goldsworthy sculptures made out of natural materials! It is a long steady ascent, and the steeper descent is extremely rough, with some real rock scrambling. It is an 'A' walk in ascent, descent and because of the terrain but on a clear day you get the best ever views of Morecambe Bay. I love it but I will never lead a walk up there and do not want to find an alternative route if there is one!



"a long steady ascent"

Hepptonstall and the route down through 'hell hole' to the canal and Hebden Bridge is another route I would prefer not to lead.

As a local said to John and I, "People have died on that route". "Not for years", I replied. "In the last two weeks" he accentuated. We did it but very slowly and nervously.



"very slowly and nervously"

I set out to enjoy a walk and if, for any reason, I do not enjoy it then I do not share it. I go back to the drawing board and adapt it if I can or plan a different walk. Yes, sometimes I find that the best route is the one I have found in a book or online. Yarrow and Burrs country parks are good examples but more often I change routes after a second pioneer and exploration of the area. This is when different options present themselves as it did at Yarrow mainly due to a lot of rain just before the walk.

On one occasion, at a bridleway and footpath junction, I looked left and the light and vista drew me in. Due to time constraints we stuck to my original route and completed the walk. The following week we went back to the start and walked in the reverse direction. When we got to the junction, we followed the light and the vista. Using the map and compass, following our senses, observing the landscape and terrain a walk evolved naturally. This is a fabulous walk which I will lead sometime in the future. I will also lead the original walk as it is a good walk too.



"we followed the light"

Barbara S

A Risk to Life and Limb

Many people sometimes feel that issues around health and safety have got a bit out of hand. Even when school children go out on nature trips, they often have to wear high vis jackets.

However, the Health and Safety Executive seems to have a blind spot when it comes to rambles in the countryside. The Health and Safety people are definitely not all over the issue of rickety and unsafe footbridges and stiles. These are after all, health and safety issues and it is easy to stumble or fall from a stile that has become unsafe due to overuse, rotting to the structure or just a general lack of maintenance.



Also, although injuries involving rambblers and cattle are relatively rare, they do happen, and you would have thought that health and safety would be concerned about the welfare of walkers. Of course, landowners have historically always been favoured in legal terms when it comes to the law and the general population. The Ramblers was itself born out of a legal struggle for ordinary people to have access to the wider countryside. It must be said of course but in the modern world most landowners do welcome walkers and look after stiles and bridges. Maintaining these is primarily the owner's responsibility, but the highway authority is obliged to fund a percentage of the cost of repairs. Unfortunately, many councils are experiencing funding problems now, so this doesn't happen.

A bull of up to ten months old can be kept in a field with a footpath crossing it, is allowed. But bulls over ten months of a recognised dairy breed (Ayrshire, British Friesian, British Holstein, Dairy Shorthorn, Guernsey, Jersey and Kerry) are banned from fields crossed by any public paths under all circumstances. All other bulls over ten months are banned unless accompanied by cows or heifers. If any bulls act in a way which endangers the public, an offence may be

committed under the existing health and safety legislation.

If a footpath crosses a field which is going to be filled with cattle, surely it should be not too difficult for a landowner to put up a temporary electric fence in place going around the edge of a field to separate rambblers from livestock. In other words, a temporary footpath alteration going around the edge of a field instead of straight across.

If you come across cattle with young in a field and the footpath crosses the field, it is probably a good idea to walk around them instead of passing close to them. It is always best to give them a wide berth.



← Ayrshire



British Friesian →



← Dairy Shorthorn



British Holstein →



← Guernsey



Jersey →



← Kerry



Tony C

Walkabout

Where in the world am I, here are a few clues?

- 1: Has the world's largest fence?
 - 2: Has a natural feature that stands taller than the Eiffel Tower?
 - 3: Has a cattle ranch that is as big as Belgium?
- Answer? Australia

Some individuals enjoy walking in a group, with people who can show them where to go in safety, can share an enjoyable chat or can point out flowers, birds and hills that they may not be aware of. Another way of connecting with your natural surroundings is to consider a type of walkabout where you would set off without a pre worked out route but are looking not just to travel alone but are looking to experience "the real voyage of discovery consisting in not just seeing new landscapes but having new eyes" Marcel Proust.

Many training or well-being programmes refer to an "Entrepreneurs Walkabout" as a new way of attempting to take business people on a type of spiritual journey that will strengthen clarity, open individuals to new ideas and help break them away from routine. When stripped of your everyday surroundings, friends, fridges full of food etc. you may have an experience that may not always be comfortable but may always invigorate!!

So, what is a "Walkabout" and do we mean something or someone that cannot be found or to take yourself on a long walking journey on land that is far from towns? Of course, we are talking about the latter and is a rite of passage in Australian Aborigine Society where males during adolescence (10-16) undertake to live in the wilderness for up to 6months to make a spiritual and traditional transition into manhood.



Uluru in Australia's Northern Territory

Mainstream Australian Society doesn't understand these indigenous needs seeing it as a nomadic predisposition to wander aimlessly rather than the indigenous people responding to their spiritual ties of

the Outback which make up the majority of the population (up to 90% in some areas i.e. 3/4 of Australia's landmass. Nonindigenous people are the descendants of colonisers who built wealth on ownership and achievement.

Aboriginal people have continued occupation for 60,000 years together with folk lore created by spirits in order to look after the land and it's peoples, "Dreamlines" or "Songlines" which map their country with routes across the continent or night skies passing on culture and expressing connectedness to the country. Songlines, Stories, Dance and Visual Art all connect these people to their land and are passed down through their families.

These different forms of the Arts help navigate across the land as they describe locations of landmarks, waterholes and other natural features with large depressions in the land being referred to as footprints. Songs must be sung in the appropriate sequence which help to navigate vast distances travelling through the deserts of the interior, some a few miles, others hundreds of miles. One "Songline" covers 2,000 miles connecting the Central Desert region to the east coast to view fishing practices whilst coastal people travel in the opposite direction in order to see the sacred sites.



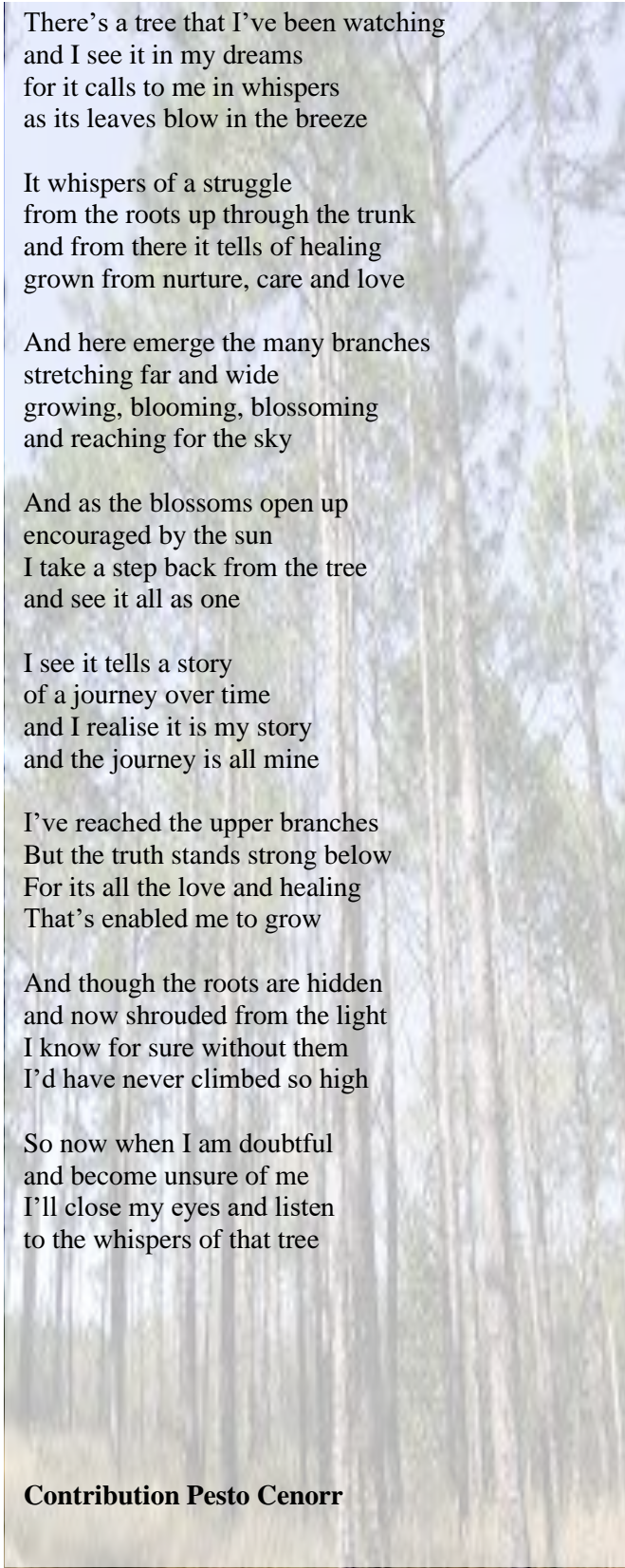
Having the ability to interpret these incredible spans of different language groups by following a melodic descriptive contour, equates to a priceless "cultural passport" which shows respect to the people of that country. Sharing these traditional beliefs in the ancestors and related laws, mean the Song/Art/Stories must continue to be practiced in order to keep the land alive.

To most people when they go for a walk it seems a simple affair and they would only go on routes previously done many times before. No need for a map or even to think. But as you can see walking can be so much more than that.

Glenda B

Growth...

from Talking to the Wild, author Becky Hemsley



There's a tree that I've been watching
and I see it in my dreams
for it calls to me in whispers
as its leaves blow in the breeze

It whispers of a struggle
from the roots up through the trunk
and from there it tells of healing
grown from nurture, care and love

And here emerge the many branches
stretching far and wide
growing, blooming, blossoming
and reaching for the sky

And as the blossoms open up
encouraged by the sun
I take a step back from the tree
and see it all as one

I see it tells a story
of a journey over time
and I realise it is my story
and the journey is all mine

I've reached the upper branches
But the truth stands strong below
For its all the love and healing
That's enabled me to grow

And though the roots are hidden
and now shrouded from the light
I know for sure without them
I'd have never climbed so high

So now when I am doubtful
and become unsure of me
I'll close my eyes and listen
to the whispers of that tree

Contribution Pesto Cenorr

Candlemass beliefs and sayings.

If Candlemass Day be fair and bright
Winter will have another fight.

If Candlemass Day brings cloud and rain,
Winter won't come again

If Candlemass day be dry and fair,
The half o' the winter's to come and mair;

If Candlemass Day be wet and foul,
The half o the winter's gone at Yule.

"The badger peeps out of his hole on Candlemas Day,
and if he finds snow, walks abroad; but if he sees the
sun shining he draws back into his hole"

German Proverb

When the cat lies in the sun in February
She will creep behind the stove in March.

If February give much snow
A fine summer it doth foreshow.

Ground Hog Day Tuesday 2nd February

Punxsutawney Phil, Pennsylvania's most famous groundhog, awoke last Tuesday morning and saw his shadow — which, according to folklore, means there will be six more weeks of winter.

Each year on 2nd February thousands descend on Gobbler's Knob in Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania, to watch the giant rodent make his annual weather prediction at dawn with the help of his "inner circle."

According to the legend, there will be six more weeks of winter if he sees his shadow. If he doesn't, spring comes early.

Jane C