

Ramblers Gems



A Spring Vale Rambling Class Publication

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A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to all our Readers.

I would like to thank all the members who have contributed short articles and photographs over the past 3 years. 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 our lesser known and forgotten histories, traditions, and folklore from this part of Lancashire, as well as interesting facts from all corners of the UK and beyond. We have also tried to inform members of some of the flora and fauna so abundant in our countryside, together with a variety of countryside related prose and poems.

This edition of Ramblers Gems is to be the **last** of our weekly magazines. I have enjoyed pulling together all the editorials received from the various contributors. Some of the articles have been written and researched from a spark of an idea or an unanswered question on one of our walks.

The original intention of Ramblers Gems was to try and keep our Spring Vale Rambling community together during the bleak times of lockdown in the COVID epidemic. I hope that we have achieved this goal. The first edition was on the 11th May 2020 and has continued as a weekly publication

Here are some of the statistic that are attached to the publication of Ramblers Gems.

Last 12 Months

Issues 50
Articles 311
Pages 250

Over last 3 years

Volumes 3
Issues 134
Articles 910
Pages 670

It is still hoped that it may be possible to publish all of the editions within several bound volumes to create a coffee table edition as a lasting keepsake of the last three years of this remarkable period.

All may not be lost for as and when interesting articles come to light these may be published on an ad hoc basis.

Michael C The Editor

Good Bye

Ramblers Gems is about to come to its natural end as it has fulfilled its original intention. It was launched in May 2020 to keep members of the Class in touch with each other when it was forbidden to walk together or to meet up with anyone outside your immediate family due to COVID 19 restrictions. In March 2020 we started the new season with a walk from Sunnyhurst Wood with a theme for members to walk dressed in a style befitting an earlier walking outfit. This was the last walk for some time as all future rambles were cancelled as strict restrictions were imposed to try and prevent the spread of the virus.

It was May 2020 when members were encouraged to send in articles on a range of subjects connected with the great outdoors for inclusion in a weekly magazine. All manner of articles were submitted. Poems and prose have appeared regularly, with other subjects ranging from exploring the Scottish Island, to Lakeland tarns, the sky at night, 'boxing hares' malevolent minks, the Moody Blues and moody cows, Ministry of Silly walks to Military of Defence secret facilities. There have been accounts of visits abroad to Cyprus and closer to home at Downham and Tockholes. There have been tales of rambles with brambles and weird stories to astound. Advice on what to take in your rucksack and explanations of Monastic halls and stately homes.

The origin of the Ramblers Association and the origins of England and Wales were explained in concise detail. Photographs have been inserted to embellish stories and to enhance articles that were on the brief side. Religious and folklore associations of plants were explored and elaborated. A story of a white stork carrying an African spear instead of traditional babies to expectant mothers was retold, while the American Civil War and its effect on Lancashire Mill workers was explained.

I have enjoyed these editions of Ramblers Gems and I would like to thank Michael our President in the role of editor who has pulled it all together. I have appreciated the many contributions from Barbara and Jane whose varied and regular articles have added to my enjoyment.

Tony C

Yarrow Valley Country Park

In an article in Vol 1 Issue 24 Barbara described a walk through the Yarrow Valley Country Park at Chorley. I thought that I would remind everyone about some of the walks within this special area.

Yarrow Valley Country Park was first established in 1987 and covers an area of over 300 hectares. The site is located between Chorley and Coppull and can be easily accessed from the car park at Birkacre Road, Chorley. This whole site has been created on land previously used for bleaching, dyeing, calico printing and mining. Once all the industrial activity had ended, the site lay derelict for over 30 years until the late 1980's when Chorley Council acquired the site. With sensitive restoration and management, the park now constitutes an important wildlife resource both within the district and county, containing 14 biological heritage sites which account for 60 per cent of the park area. The most important ecological feature of the park is the presence of large areas of mature ancient woodland.

This Country Park is now of local historical importance with restored mill lodges and water courses, new footpaths, several picnic areas and a purpose-built visitor centre, which provides an ideal setting for a host of recreational activities.

Four guided walks of varying lengths are available. **The Yellow Route** This is a 1 mile circular route around the lake feature, known as the Big Lodge Water. It is wheelchair and pushchair friendly and has views overlooking the lake which contains many varieties of waterfowl.

The Green Route This is a 2.5 mile circular walk encompassing the Big Lodge and field paths in the Plock Wood area. This route is not suitable for wheelchairs or prams.

The Blue Route This is a 4.5 mile circular route that walks around Big Lodge and through woodland adjacent to Duxbury Park. This route is not suitable for wheelchairs or prams.

The Red Route This is 5.5 mile circular route that heads off in a northerly direction from the Birkacre car park, up as far as Euxton House. This route is not suitable for wheelchairs.

A full description of all these routes is available on the Chorley.gov website. These guides can be printed off.

Michael C

Pilgrim Trails

A pilgrimage is defined as journeying with purpose on foot to holy places. This has shown itself since hunter-gatherers followed well-worn tracks, which became processional pagan pathways, which in turn became ritualised journeys in Celtic, medieval and early modern Christianity. A pilgrimage was once a popular expression of leisure and spirituality, enjoyed by Kings and serfs alike.

Today, there is a global renaissance of pilgrimage – 350,000 pilgrims walk the Camino to Santiago each year, 2.5 million make the Hajj, 25+ million the Arba'een and 50 million the Kumbh Mela. The tradition in England and Wales was brought to an abrupt end in 1538, when Henry VIII and Thomas Cromwell banned pilgrimage. In Scotland, like England and Wales, pilgrimage was actively discouraged and many shrines and monasteries (providing free pilgrim accommodation) were destroyed during the Reformation period.

Consequently, learning from the past, we should not attempt to imitate medieval forms of religious exclusivity. Today a pilgrimage is accessible to as many people as possible, reconnecting them with an ancient tradition in a modern way. To achieve this, a pilgrimage is a practice that is open to all, whatever someone's beliefs, background, age or physical ability. The British Pilgrimage Trust has been established to make undertaking a pilgrimage in the British landscape attractive and open to all.

Throughout the country there is currently a network of pilgrimage trails already well established that allow the walker to become immersed in nature to bring us closer to this primal part of ourselves. By paying particular attention to the land through which we travel, and the effect these places have on us, it is possible to cultivate a sense of belonging in, and return to, the natural world. You do not have to travel far for a pilgrim route as a couple are right on our doorstep.



Camino to Santiago Pilgrimage Route

From Whalley Abbey – 8.5/9 miles – Whalley Abbey is in many ways an evocative starting point for a pilgrimage in this region, since it was the site of one of Britain's earliest churches, mentioned by the missionary St Paulinus in 628AD. The site of this church is no longer known, but the later Whalley Abbey has left its mark, now a picturesque ruin owned and managed by the diocese of Blackburn. The fine parish church further embellishes Whalley's credentials as a site of ancient spirituality, with some late Saxon (c. 1050AD) stone crosses in the churchyard. The pilgrim path then heads south through fields to the town of Great Harwood and its medieval church of St Bartholomew and St John before linking up with the Leeds and Liverpool Canal for a final stretch into the town centre, from where a short walk leads to Blackburn Cathedral.



Whalley Abbey

From Hollinshead – 7 miles – This pilgrimage starts at the mysterious Hollinshead wellhouse, a sacred spring that arises in a curious stone building, the only structure that remains standing amidst the ruins of Hollinshead Hall. Heading north from here the pleasant riverside path meanders its way to St Stephen's Church in Tockholes, where another stone curiosity awaits. Thought to be the stump of an Anglo-Saxon cross, Tocca's Stone stands in the churchyard, above a plinth with a medieval inscription, while a unique outdoor pulpit can be found nearby. The route then heads north, mostly avoiding roads in favour of lanes and farmland paths to the southern outskirts of Blackburn, where it picks up a section of the Leeds and Liverpool Canal before arriving at Blackburn Cathedral itself.



Eleanor

Hollinshead Well House

Walking at Night

At this time of year, whether you are a follower of astronomy or religion, your thoughts may still turn to the greatest puzzle of all - the Star of Bethlehem. What was it? Why did it appear on that particular night in December? Was it a massive supernova? Was it a comet? Or was it truly indeed a heavenly signal sent to guide three eastern philosophers to the birth of Jesus?

Whatever it was you can't underestimate that it certainly offered the three wise men an adventure to travel across the Far and Middle East by travelling at night as they "followed the star" and if you enjoy night walking, winter is the best season to undertake this activity due to the clear but star packed skies. After the Autumn equinox, skies are clearer, crisper and less hazy and you don't have to wait till 10 for darkness to fall. The longer night is perfect for night walking.



At first you may feel a little odd as others are getting back from their day walks just as you are setting off. You may even feel naughty as the landscape changes around you and the familiar changes and becomes alien like. Even starting off your walk by wearing a good head torch for reassurance, you could choose a night offering a full moon which will bleach out the number of stars but will offer more natural light. If you want to see stars by the millions, choose a new moon night. At a point on your walk, turn off your head torch for 5mins, stand still, allow your night vision to register the landscape and the skies above.



The planet Jupiter showing the giant red spot

Once you start delving into the facts surrounding astronomy related information, the vastness of any one small part of it is unfathomable. Such as Rigel, the star at the bottom right of the constellation Orion, is actually 3 stars, and if the largest sat where our sun does, it's surface area would extend out past Pluto. It's bigger than our entire solar system. At the moment on a cloudless night, you will easily see the bright orange planet of Mars and the brilliant shining gas giant planet of Jupiter. Both of these planets will be following the path of the Sun and will be in a different position in the night sky depending on the time of night that you are observing the heavens,

You may be alone on this walk but other well known people are renowned for doing just this same type of walking. People like Thomas Hardy, Ian Fleming and Professor Brian Cox.

So many of us have become disconnected from nature by being exposed constantly to city or town street lighting. So, reconnect with nature. Wrap up warm. Take your head torch, binoculars, and your sense of adventure.

If any of the stars begin to move and then hover in the night sky, check if there is a stable nearby. Something amazing maybe about to happen.



Glenda B

Festive Traditions Answers

It's that time of year for jumpers, hats, socks, jokes, music and party games so here are the ANSWERS to last week's **CHRISTMAS QUIZ** for the 31 days of December.

1. Norway
2. Tchaikovsky
3. Silver sixpence
4. James
5. Yule Log
6. Wine
7. Santa Claus
8. Crackers
9. George V
10. Isaac Newton
11. Romans
12. Frumenty
13. Lichen
14. Wham
15. 1966
16. Follow the star
17. 1899
18. Charles Dickens
19. Bon Noel
20. 6th January
21. The ten commandments in the Bible
22. 1670
23. Bing Crosby
24. A golden sickle
25. The head of a pig with mustard
26. The four Gospels in the Bible
27. In the South Pacific
28. 1521
29. 14-16 miles per hour
30. I gave you my heart
31. My two front teeth.



Barbara S

Rudolph the Red Nose Reindeer

Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer is a fictional reindeer created by Robert L. May in 1939 as an assignment for the Chicago-based Montgomery Ward publishing company. Rudolph is usually depicted as the ninth and youngest of Santa Claus's reindeer,

This is the story of Rudolph who had a big, bright red nose, unlike the other reindeer in Father Christmas's herd. Everyone always made fun of him. So, one day, Rudolph went to Santa and asked him if he could have a proper job to undertake to show all the other reindeer that he too was capable of pulling his weight, but Santa told him that he was too small for that. Hearing this the other reindeer made fun of him and said that all the local children would scream with fright if they saw his bright red nose glowing. Rudolph hid his unique nose in shame and walked back to his home, his head hanging low.

It was Christmas Eve and just one hour before Santa was about to leave, a huge snowstorm hit, and the sky became very dark and foreboding. He was afraid that he couldn't deliver the Christmas gifts to the children in such bad weather. Suddenly, Santa remembered about Rudolph and his big, bright red nose. Rudolph was only too happy to help. The brave little Rudolph took them on that dark night through the harsh wind and thick fog. As a team, all the reindeer tried their best to fly faster.

As the sun rose and the fog began to melt away, Santa had already delivered all the Christmas toys to the children all over the world. Santa presented Rudolph with the Medal of Honour for his bravery. He became the youngest and bravest reindeer to ever join Santa's sleigh team. From then on, everybody loved Rudolph and the other reindeer never laughed at him again.



Maggie A