

# Ramblers Gems



A Spring Vale Rambling Class Publication

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For further information or to submit a contribution email: [svrcramblers@gmail.com](mailto:svrcramblers@gmail.com) Web Site <http://www.springvaleramblers.co.uk/>

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 Crocus Heaven
- 2 What did you do before you went Rambling Part 2
- 3 Beehives on The Naze / Breathe ...
- 4 New Walking Routes
- 5 Landscapes - Fields

## Crocus Heaven

Well they are here at last!

After a long, cold and wet winter with us all wondering when the first few signs of Spring will appear they arrive. For months there is no sign but then all at once the beautiful colours are there.

What is your favourite? Many different shades of Purple or white? Orange or yellow? All with yellow stamens. All short stemmed hugging the ground as if scared to show themselves. But all at once they show themselves in huge swathes especially if you are on a visit to a town that has a large central area of parkland that has been planted up. Harrogate is one such town. The Stray is renowned for attracting visitors each year just to see their well-known tourist attraction - their crocus.

A member of the Iris family, they flower in either Spring, Summer or Autumn before they become dormant after flowering. It is the Autumn flowering plant that offers us the riches of saffron to be used as a spice or dyestuff and is one of the most expensive spices in the world with Iran being at the centre of spice production.



Crocuses are found in woodland, scrubland and meadowland, from sea level to alpine mountains, from the Mediterranean, through to the islands of the Aegean, to North Africa and on to Western China. In the west we received them through Turkey from China in the 16th Century as a flowering plant. But there is no doubt that all these countries throughout the world are continually on the lookout after a hard winter for their friends the humble Crocus



Glenda B

## What did you do before you went Rambling Part 2

While out walking with my rambling friends I regularly get asked what I did in an earlier life. Here is a short insight.

In 1996 I bumped into an old school friend who told me about a new community group setting up in Great Harwood. Very quickly I became involved with Local Agenda 21 and then, without knowing it, the Sustainable Action Plan for Hyndburn. The group became known as Great Harwood PROSPECTS Panel and representatives from the Civic Society, community, voluntary and faith groups joined the Panel.

A town survey was undertaken to identify projects that slotted into 'Think Global, Act Local'. At this point I began to learn so much about the environment, climate change and global warming. Conferences, training, awareness raising activities and practical volunteer days were enjoyed.

I took part in a programme about permaculture and companion planting, and this changed how I thought about mother earth and living more sustainably. Permaculture (permanent agriculture) is a fancy name someone made up. It is the development of ecosystems intended to be sustainable and self-sufficient. It integrates human activity with the land, natural surroundings, resources, people and the environment for mutual benefit. The Native American Nation and other cultures have been living by this system for generations.

Companion planting is about the planting of two or more crop species together in order to achieve benefits such as higher yield and pest control. A fine example is 'The Three Sisters' gardening done by Native Americans who planted nutritious sweetcorn, climbing beans and pumpkins or squash together in a 12X12-foot (4 square metre) patch. They had been doing this for hundreds of years before the American colonists arrived.

One of the first projects undertaken by the Panel fitted snugly into the 'walking' theme of sustainable travel. We repaired stiles and stone bridges along the 3-mile route of the Great Harwood Nature Walk. In went tall ladder stiles. In subsequent years these were replaced by wooden two-step stiles and kissing gates because of an initiative called 'access to the countryside'.

During Covid-19 lockdown most have been replaced by metal kissing gates. So, finally after 25 years, it is much easier to walk the footpaths and bridleways of Great Harwood.

At the back of Bank Mill community centre, the old mill site was improved by the introduction of paths, seating, picnic benches, a storytelling circle, shrubs, bulbs, bird and bat boxes. Four murals were designed and painted by local young people. Tesco and Railway Terrace are my favourite ones.

Over the years I was able to undertake a lot of free training in hedge-laying, drystone walling, small tree felling with hand tools, coppicing, winter tree identification, creating wildflower beds and my favourite scything were all enjoyed. First aid, risk assessment, health and safety, small tool handling and maintenance, and woodland management were ongoing courses updated on a regular basis.

After about 10 years we took over the management of Edge End Wood, so I got to bring all my training together as 'project lead' and wrote the management plan.

After 18 years the Panel changed direction and we concentrated on 'Boots & Bikes'. A two-day bike-ride-leader course put me on two wheels, and it has been suggested that on day two I wore two pairs of cycling underwear! Each year in May we had hosted an annual walk as part of Walk in the Woods month. In 2013 we developed a 12-month programme of 'Season Walks from Great Harwood' in partnership with Hyndburn Ramblers. I met Sue (coach rambles) and Howard who introduced me to SVRC and the rest is history...



**Barbara S**

## Beehives on The Naze

A recent conversation with fellow Spring Valeians (?) brought up the question “where is The Naze”? So, with future walks in mind I did a bit of research. I have walked in the area a couple of times before – once was by accident!

The Naze covers an area on the west side of the Broadhead Valley, near Wayoh and Entwistle reservoirs, rising to a plateau above Whittlestone Head. The area is typical west Pennine moorland and is interesting because of its industrial heritage. The Naze has been mined and quarried by surface extraction and underground tunnelling, the whole area features one form or another of industrial heritage.

One site was Broadhead Colliery I am not too sure of the dates but investigations on the first edition OS map mine shafts are shown close to the beehive ovens. By 1894 the ovens are shown with no text, and by 1910 the maps indicate “old coke ovens”.

These old coke ovens at the Naze site are well worth a visit. They are shaped like beehives – hence the name and are traditional in the West Pennine Moors area. They were constructed with a hole at the top, and another in the side to feed the fire. The ovens were fired through the side opening, then coal was added through the hole in the top and the holes blocked. This process burned off impurities in the coal to produce a purer form of coal called “coke”. Apparently, the impurities were terrible pollutants and the surrounding moorland plants died off. It is possible now to get inside the ovens to admire their construction – but beware, walkers have found deep rotting sheep or the evidence of ‘parties’ in these handy shelters. As with the West Pennine Moors be prepared for bogs, even in good weather! There are alleged tunnels in the adjoining quarry – that is an adventure for another day.



The Coke Ovens at the Naze in the Broadhead Valley

Jane C

## Breathe...

From Talking to the Wild, by Becky Hemsley

‘She sat at the back and they said she was shy  
She led from the front and they hated her pride

They asked her advice and then questioned her  
guidance  
They branded her loud, then were shocked by her  
silence

When she shared no ambition they said it was sad  
So she told them her dreams and they said she was  
mad

They told her they'd listen, then covered their ears  
And gave her a hug while they laughed at her fears

And she listened to all of it thinking she should  
Be the girl they told her to be best as she could

But one day she asked what was best for herself  
Instead of trying to please everyone else

So she walked to the forest and stood with the trees  
She heard the wind whisper and dance with the leaves

She spoke to the willow, the elm and the pine  
And she told them what she'd been told time after  
time

She told them she felt she was never enough  
She was either too little or far far too much

Too loud or too quiet, too fierce or too weak  
Too wise or too foolish, too bold or too meek,

Then she found a small clearing surrounded by firs  
And she stopped...and she heard what the trees said to  
her

And she sat there for hours not wanting to leave  
For the forest said nothing, it just let her breathe.'

*Please remember when someone is at the back of the walk, they may not be struggling, they are talking to the trees, listening to the wind, dancing in the leaves, seeing the colours and breathing it all in because, just for today, they don't want to lead from the front.*

**Pesto Cenorr**



## New Walking Routes

It is so easy to get stuck in a walking rut, repeating the same routes and holidaying in the same national parks. Here are a few ways of breaking the mould and exploring areas anew.

### Areas you love

We all love a particular type of landscape whether it is the sweeping mountains of the Lakes or the rolling hills of the Yorkshire Dales. What underlies the areas that you enjoy are the rocks beneath your feet. By studying a map published by the British Geological Survey you will be able to discover the rock types beneath your feet and then search out other parts of the country to find where else that rock appears. The limestone in the Yorkshire Dales is similar to chalk to be found in the Lincolnshire and the Yorkshire Wolds running all the way down to the South Downs, giving you lots of new areas to explore. The hard granites of the Lakes are replicated in the far north of Scotland on Skye and continues across the Isle of Mull and the Ardnamurchan peninsular.

### Walk with me

Ask one of your closest friends where their all-time favourite walk is, put a date in the diary and walk it together. It need not be a classic, it could be as simple as five mile circular walk that they do every Saturday- the key thing is to walk somewhere new to you. Taking someone with great enthusiasm for that place is infectious.



### A Roll of the Dice

How about instead of setting off from your front door and following your usual route, let the random roll of a dice take you to unexpected places. At every footpath

junction assign numbers on the dice to each option. A one or two for a right turn, three or four for straight on and a five or a six for a left turn. Just let the roll of the dice determine your route. You will never know where you will end up so you may need to get a friend to come and pick you up.



### Ask a friend

It is not always possible to ask a total stranger about the best walks within an area but asking a local with some inside knowledge can often lead to some surprising great new walks. It is always easier to get chatting, over a coffee and cake in a tea shop or to someone who knows the local area with a pint in the pub. Everyone loves to tell in great detail, their favourite walks if only asked.



### A Chain Reaction

If you have a favourite area, where when you go you always walk the same route. The next time you are there have a look around at the view and find an area that also appeals to you. It could be a far hill, a reservoir, or distant woodland. Then make it a goal to go for a walk at that point of interest the next time you venture to the area. When you get there do the same again and you soon will be exploring further and further afield and discovering new exciting areas.

**You could just come walking with the Spring Vale Rambling Class.** The 2022 season of walks offer a whole range of new and interesting walking routes in areas you may never have considered. Buy a syllabus for only £5 and become a member.

**Eleanor**

## Landscapes - Fields

Some 6000 years ago, Stone Age people started cutting down the trees that made up Britain's ancient woodlands to form clearings which were used for cultivating crops and to keep livestock safe. These were the very first fields. Once the land had been cleared it was sown either with field crops or was roughly enclosed and allowed to grow its own covering of wild grasses and wildflowers to use for grazing. The concentration of seeds, grasses and flowers in these clearings attracted large numbers of insects, rodents, and their predators. These first fields were our first nature reserves. These very early fields would look very strange to us, for they were not neat, nor rectangular with straight edges as we see today. These fields were worked by people who only had basic stone tools and manpower to clear and work the ground.

By the time of the Domesday Book in 1086, the big landowners- the church, the crown and noblemen had organised all the best farmland into the open field strip farming system that remained throughout the medieval period. This system came about as a means of ensuring a fair share for all. The landowners didn't farm the land themselves; the strips were rented out to tenants who did the work and paid their rent in kind by handing over a percentage of the crops as 'tithes'- hence the tithe barns where the crops were stored. Many of these old barns can still be seen today. This arrangement worked very well, mainly because it was organised cooperatively, everyone helping each other out at busy times. Some of the strips were put down to long term grazing, while others were used for arable crops on a strict rotation system. This avoided a build-up of pests or diseases by natural means, long before the arrival of pesticides.

After the Black Death killed off one third of the population many of the medieval hamlets were abandoned. The landowners found it hard to get labour and tenants, so much of the arable land reverted to grassland and used for grazing sheep.



The early 1700's saw the end of the strip farming system and the start of the patchwork of fields that make up today's landscape. Farming became very profitable for the large landowner, where their income came from rents paid by the tenants who did all the manual work. This was the time that the landed gentry were rebuilding their old family houses or moving away from manor houses on the edges of the village and building themselves grand country houses in beauty spots. The land around these new stately homes underwent a massive makeover and the parkland and the managed garden was born.

Although the rich gentry never had it so good, the farm workers were struggling and as the Industrial Revolution took off many of these workers moved to the towns in search of better wages. The large advances in house building, roads and railways during the Victorian period left the countryside way behind and farming suffered a further decline. It wasn't until the First World War that the government became concerned about farming. With much of our food imported from abroad and merchant shipping at risk from enemy action, the country could easily have been starved into submission. Food production had to be stepped up and farmers were given subsidies to increase the level where we would be self-sufficient. By the Second World War farmers were required to plough up ancient pastures and more of the heath and moorland was brought into production.



It was after 1946 that it was evident that agriculture had to change. Labour was in short supply, so farms became more mechanised, and horses were replaced by tractors. As tractors and combine harvesters became large and more powerful, hedges were taken out to create bigger fields that allowed the new machinery to work more efficiently. Instead of growing a bit of everything, the farms began specialising in a single crop to justify the high price of machinery to handle it.

All of these changes have resulted in the landscape that we see today. It has always been managed and shaped by man.

**Michael C**