

Ramblers Gems



A Spring Vale Rambling Class Publication

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Current Restriction Update

Ramblers the leading charity for walking, have worked with government and other partners to understand and plan how organised group walks can resume in a way which is COVID-secure. As part of this process, they have developed guidance for organised walking groups. You can find more information about the exemption from the ‘rule of 6’ for organised sport and outdoor physical activities in the government [guidance](#) (see section 3.16), and on the Sport England website.

In particular, the activities *“either need to be organised by a national governing body, club, registered instructor/coach, business or charity; and/or involve someone who has received an official license to use equipment relevant to the activity.”*

This exemption applies to SVRC as an organised club, with a constitution, committee and third party liability insurance. We will use the Ramblers guidance as our reference point but will always refer to the relevant government guidelines to ensure compliance.

This new guidance **will allow** us to start up our walks programme in a limited and different way. We will restrict the numbers attending, ensure social distancing, collect contact details and remain safe at all times.

Things leaders do on Walks

The job description for a walks leader might be along the lines. A walks leader must be able to share their passion and enthusiasm for leading people on a group walk in a welcoming, safe and enjoyable way. They must be familiar with a map, meticulously plan the route in minute detail, know without hesitation where they are going and keep everyone safe. They must also be able to demonstrate the following 5 things.

1. They should take charge of any ‘Hello’ saying to everyone and anyone they meet, because if there’s any icebreaking that needs to be done they should be the ones to swing that pickaxe.
2. Be able to name all distant landmarks, features, and unusual obscure buildings because, for sure, they will be asked and are really expected know fully the answer in great detail. Great
3. Reach gates first, because life on a walk is like a real life version of the Crystal Maze and when it come to the Chinese finger trap that is that unfamiliar gate mechanism or the Monkey Fist knot gate fastening they should be the one to solve them.
4. Act like they are unafraid of cows knowing full well that it might be their funny hat or bright coat that put the group in peril by making the herd curious in the first place.
5. Repeat stories. Leaders, unlike Google, store a vast amount of knowledge that is rarely consulted and when the opportunity arises, they should be only too willing to tell everyone the tale all over again.

Michael C

Now for something completely different

In an earlier existence, I enjoyed cycling and part of this pleasure was using an adult racing TRICYCLE. A group of us would meet annually in June in a small village in France, to take part in a cycle race which the French called 'Championnat du Monde pour Tricycles'. Some of our group rode the 180 miles from St Malo, over a three-day period. Others would arrive by car. Over a measured circular course of 25km riders would set off at minute intervals and were timed. Saturday afternoon saw a lot of French people spectating these 'mad English' on their unique machines.

The following is a personal account of some aspects of one of the most enjoyable of many visits to France. Three of us had ridden down to St Marsault, near Parthenay in the Department of Deux Sevres. I had a smattering of French, so we got accommodation and meals, no problem. On the Saturday of the race, I woke up with a painful lower back. At the pharmacy I was offered a massive plaster smelling like Ralgex (capsicum). Alison, one of my cycling friends and an ex-nurse, applied the plaster and as the race was to start at 5 p.m., I had a light lunch and went to my room for a rest. The hotel was opposite the village church, where a wedding was in progress. After 1 hour of church bells, there followed half an hour of car-horns. At 4 pm, I put on my racing kit, collected my tricycle from the hotel garage, where the owner filled our drink bottles with iced water. It was around 30 degrees even in the late afternoon. We rode the 2 miles to the next village, where the event started. Each rider, would have a motor cyclist following, and there was a service car, just like those in the Tour de France. The course was marshalled at junctions, with gendarmes at all main road crossings.



A Frenchman arrived on a utility trike with a dog in a basket on the front. He was set off first! Next year he says he will bring lots of friends and plenty of brandy. At 5p.m. I am off, on the first long steady descent to the next village soon in top gear and my computer shows 38m.p.h. I soon level out to a steady 20m.p.h. Mouth is dry, lips sticking together, take a drink from my bottle. At a road crossing a gendarme waves me through and I nearly run over his foot with one of my rear wheels! After a long straight run of about 3km, there is a sharp right turn. A camera from French station TV3 is there to capture any dramas. Now the road is narrower and bumpier, with some short climbs.

In the village of Courlay there are lots of spectators shouting 'bravo bravo' and the fountain in the village centre looked really inviting. I do remember a road safety sign saying, '*Isn't Life more precious than Time?*' Soon I rejoined a smooth main road (gendarmed out) at St Juin de Milly, where my top gear is engaged and a good speed maintained to the island visited earlier. This time the gendarme steps back and I am on the final climb back to the finish in the village where loads of spectators, banners and bunting line the route. I park the trike, drain my drink bottle and walk back to encourage remaining the riders.

After all the riders have finished, we retire to the village bar at around 7pm, then its across to the village green for prize presentation. Everyone who rode gets a medal with tricolour ribbon. The main winners get a kiss from the Mayor of La Foret, who happens to be a woman. The Mayor of St Marsault is Alphonse and there would still have been kissing if Alphonse had presented the awards, of course. Later a special meal laid on at the Bar sur Sevre in La Foret, for 30 cyclists. Conversation was animated and varied, fostered by liberal consumption of wine.

On the Sunday all cyclists took part in a social ride to Alphonse daughter's restaurant. Sunday evening was a Fete Repas in St Marsault with music and singing. Monday started the epic TWO Day 180-mile ride back to St Malo, to catch the Wednesday a.m. ferry.

For cycle touring, even today, France rates very highly for plenty of quiet roads, excellent food and friendly accommodation.

Alan R

Spring Vale Ramblers in 2006



Spring Vale Ramblers in 2004



The Serpent of Ooze Castle Wood

I would like to relate to you an interesting folk legend that surrounds a small wood in the Pickup Bank area. One of the prominent local landowners in this area during medieval times was the Grimshaw family and this tale relates to the slaying of a large snake by a member of that family during that period. There has been some confusion about the relationship of this tale to the Grimshaw surname and a possible connection of the serpent tale to the Grimshaw coat of arms.



According to a 1742 publication by Charles Owen, a Grimshaw living at Clayton Hall was travelling to the family's holdings in Eccleshill when he performed a valuable community service by killing a large serpent in Ooze Castle Wood, about a mile southeast of the Grimshaw residence. This is an extract from that document.

"I am informed by some persons who had it by tradition from ancient people, that formally there was in this country a monstrous serpent of four or five yards long and thicker than a common axle tree of a cart and very mischievous, praying upon lambs etc. Its chief residence was in a wood near Pickup Bank, a few miles from Blackburn in Lancashire called Oozel Castle where in there is yet a little spot of ground called Griam's Ark, which is a deep cavern situated among rocks in a wood from hence it was to come out and bask itself on a sunny bank. The picture of this serpent is drawn with wings, two legs and talons like an eagle which is seen in some ancient houses and particular at Clayton Hall near Dunkinhal (Dunkenhalgh) by which it appears to be very large and furious"

Owen made a connection between this serpent and the griffin on the Grimshaw coat of arms, but the exact nature of the connection was extremely vague.

Ooze Castle Wood is not mentioned on modern day OS maps, but if reference is made to earlier 6 inch to the mile editions, the wood is clearly marked to the north of Shooters Hill adjacent to the small reservoir at Pickup Bank.



Michael C

Sign and Symbols Quiz Answers

These are the answers to the Signs and Symbols quiz from last weeks edition of Ramblers Gems 20.

1. Public Footpath open walkers
2. Public Bridleway open to walker/horse rider/cyclist
3. Restricted Byway as 2 and horse drawn vehicle
4. Public Byway open to all traffic
5. National Trail for walker and some trails cyclists
6. Access Land open to walkers not restricted to paths
7. Railway Station
8. Viewpoint 180°
9. Youth Hostel
10. Sand/Sand and Shingle
11. Gardens/Arboretum
12. Coniferous Wood
13. Orchard
14. Nature Reserve
15. Place of Worship with spire, minaret or dome
16. Scrub
17. Contour Lines
18. Scree
19. National Park Boundary
20. Pit or Quarry
21. Recreational Path
22. English Heritage Site
23. Electricity Transmission Lines
24. Vertical Face/Cliff

Barbara S

Wycoller - a lost world

A Lancashire moorland hamlet that almost vanished under a mass of weeds and deliberate neglect back in the 60's has been brought back to life with the gradual restoration over many year.

Wycoller, founded by Anglo Saxon hill farmers more than 1000 years ago and enlarged by cottagers and yeomen in the 15th and 16th centuries has seen a remarkable recovery and is now at the centre of a country park. This ancient settlement between Colne and Haworth is in 'Bronte Country' and blossomed into a prosperous handloom weaving centre on an important packhorse route over the moors in the 18th and 19th centuries. The hamlet died virtually overnight as its economy collapsed under the forces of the Industrial Revolution which brought steam driven new machinery to produce textiles elsewhere in Lancashire and Yorkshire.

In 1820 the population was around 350 and most of the families were engaged in weaving wool, but by the end of the century there were fewer than 50 in the community. Wycoller Hall, the big house built by the Hartley family near the end of the 16th century. It is reputed to be the Fearn dean manor of Charlotte Bronte's "Jane Eyre". The hall was extended in the late 18th century by its last owner, Squire Cunliffe. A keen gambler, Cunliffe also borrowed money against Wycoller Hall to fund the building work. He died heavily in debt in 1818. After his death, stones from the Hall were plundered to build nearby houses and other structures. The hall subsequently fell into ruin but has now been partly restored to provide a safe environment to explore. The hall's huge fireplace, large enough to roast an ox remains intact, made good by a team of skilled craftsmen.



The aisled barn, situated adjacent to the hall, is regarded as one of the finest surviving examples of this type of structure and was built about 1650, probably using the timbers from an earlier cruck barn. It is a typical northern aisled barn with five bays, wide aisles suitable for stalling cattle and a low-pitched roof. The openings in the side indicate it was later converted to a coach house for the hall. The barn is now the visitor centre for the park.



Wycoller Beck which flows through the hamlet is crossed by no less than seven bridges, the oldest of which is Clam Bridge. This bridge is more than 1000 years old and is listed as an Ancient Monument. It is a simple bridge, just a single slab laid across the beck. Close to the ruins of Wycoller Hall is the late 18th / early 19th century Clapper Bridge. Grooves in the bridge formed by the weavers' clogs were apparently chiselled flat by a farmer whose daughter fell and was fatally injured on the bridge. The other bridge worth a note is the 15th century Pack-Horse Bridge recognised by its substantial twin arches spanning the beck. It is sometimes referred to as Sally's Bridge after Sally Owen, mother of Wycoller's last squire.



Eleanor

