

Ramblers Gems



A Spring Vale Rambling Class Publication

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

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Who are we?

Spring Vale Rambling Class is a local rambling group based out of Darwen. We are not restricted to walking within this area but enjoy exploring paths and vistas further afield to within a maximum of an hour's drive.

Our yearly season is from the 3rd weekend in March to the end of the 2nd weekend in March of the following year, when we offer fortnightly Saturday and mid week evening walks during our Summer season and fortnightly Saturday walks only during our Winter season.

The cost of membership is only £5.00 for a year or part year. The possession of a syllabus, our programme of walk details, is a full credential of membership of the Class. The payment of the £5 is not to buy a syllabus but is your individual membership fee. This covers all the 37 rambles that we offer, working out at less than 14 pence per ramble. There is not a reduced rate for joining partway through a year or one syllabus per household.

To join the Class please send your membership fee and a stamped address envelope to the Secretary at 103 School Lane Guide Blackburn BB1 2LW.

Next Walk and AGM

The next ramble for the Class will be on Saturday 24th October starting at 2.00pm. Meeting at Spring Vale Church, Watery Lane, BB3 2ET Darwen. You **must** book.

This will be a walk starting from the church, continuing through Whitehall Park and up towards Lords Hall nestling on the edge of the moors. Our route will then follow along the contour of the moor heading towards the tower then drop back into the valley and then take bridleways heading towards Bury Fold. The final section will be past Print Shop, Whitehall and returning to Spring Vale. The walking distance will be 6 miles. It is planned to have the **Annual General Meeting** during the walk. This will not take the usual format but will report only on our financial position and give members an update of the current situation and a chance to ask questions. There will **not** be the usual Potato Pie and Tea after the AGM due to the restrictions.

Our Way Forward

We want to keep the numbers on walks low and at a comfortable level to reflect the conditions of the walk, thus ensuring our members are kept safe.

We will only offer our walks to members where we will take their contact details, a telephone number and/or email address to meet government guidelines. The new rules are detailed in Ramblers Gems Issue 23.

These walks are not by invitation only, but you do need to inform Michael the President, that you are attending prior to the walk on 07903 829756 or email svrcramblers@gmail.com to allow him to compile the list of attendees.

You will only be able to book one ramble at a time. This will ensure fairness to all SVRC members. We will also continually review and refine as situations change.

Glenda B Secretary

The Lancaster Canal

Spring Vale Ramblers often walk along the picturesque towpath of the Lancaster Canal when we undertake rambles from Glasson Docks, the Crook of Lune and Garstang

The Preston to Lancaster canal was built at the height of the canal boom. In 1796 the Kendal to Lancaster section was completed and coal was carried from the Lancashire coalfields to feed industries in Kendal, and the coconut-matting factory at Holme. The products of the Kendal area were transported to the markets of Lancashire. Prosperity was short-lived as railways and better roads made the canal a poor alternative. The canal closed to commercial traffic in 1947, and finally to all navigation in 1955. The building of the M6 cut the canal permanently north of Holme.



The Lancaster Canal looking towards Farleton Fell

North of Tewitfield, the canal is a place of true tranquillity. Wildlife is prolific and the water has taken on a clarity not seen in other sections. Moorhen and coot nest within the sedges, Pike can be glimpsed in the water, mallard and swans share the water with heron. A walk along the towpath is almost certain to be rewarded by the sighting of 10 to 20 species of birds. One only has to walk the section used by powered craft south of Tewitfield to see the difference in water quality. Despite the proximity of the M6 motorway, the traffic noise is only distracting where the canal lies to windward. It is still possible to follow the line of the canal on towards Kendal, using the remains of canal bridges now isolated in the centre of farm fields, well away from any sign of a canal. There is an annual long distance walk from Preston to Kendal and a suggestion that the canal be reconnected to Kendal - however the huge cost and monumental works involving locks under the M6, make this pure make-believe.

Alan R

Not mushroom to compromise

As we start to move into autumn, fruit becomes prominent on bushes and trees. It is also the time when mushrooms start to appear. Although some mushrooms are edible, it is a golden rule that you should never eat anything unless you are absolutely sure which species is which. Some are very poisonous. There have been incidents of people eating the wrong ones, with fatal consequences or leaving them with life changing conditions, such as liver damage.

Thinking of mushrooms, (mushrooms and toadstools are basically the same) reminds me of a Spring Vale Ramblers walk led by my dad (Henry) some years ago in the Ribble Valley. Before the walk started, a gentleman I can't remember who, asked Henry what time he thought we would be finishing the ramble, as he had somewhere to go afterwards. My dad suggested a time and we set off. We were about 3/4 of our way into the ramble when our route took us across the field by River Ribble which was full of mushrooms - I had never seen so many in one place. The general consensus was that they were edible, this subsequently proved to be correct. As we walked along members began picking them and putting them in any bags they had with them.



Wild Field Mushrooms

Before long the column of walkers had disintegrated with everybody wandering all over the field, collecting mushrooms. Although Henry also collected some mushrooms, he eagerly suggested that they had better move on, pointing out that there was someone who didn't want to be late finishing. The man concerned simply held up his hand shook his head and said, "Oh it doesn't matter I'm enjoying myself."

Tony C

The Yarrow Valley Walk

This walk was the first for Spring Vale Rambling Class following COVID 19 restrictions and was undertaken on the 10th October adhering to the new rules.

On a sunny autumn day our 6.5-mile walk commenced from the Yarrow Valley Country Park at Birkacre, continued via sections of the Chorley Circular footpath, Duxbury mature ancient woodland and Jubilee Park (the site of Duxbury Hall). We walked along the Leeds Liverpool canal, passing disused coal mines and a railway track bed. We completed our walk back alongside another section of the River Yarrow to see the fish negotiating the fish ladder. There are three ponds referred to as “lodges”. At Big Lodge, which is more like a lake than a pond, we fed the swans, ducks and gulls. It is a wildlife-rich area with 14 biological heritage sites accounting for 60 per cent of the park. Today we saw a heron near the weir. This whole area has evidences of our industrial heritage and I would like to share with you some of those interesting facts.

The name Birkacre derives from ‘the field where the birch trees grow’. Farming was the main source of livelihood. Its involvement with industry dates from the 14th Century. The main reason for the establishment and diversity of industry at Birkacre was the good flow of water in the River Yarrow and the proximity of coal near the land surface, a damp climate and soft water essential for textile manufacture.

It was in 1396 that a local landowner and his neighbour made an attachment to the mill pond and altered the course of the river. On 10th October 2020, 624 years later, we find it still follows the same course. By 1423 there were at least two mills at work. One of these mills was a “waulk”, “walke” or fulling mill, where cloth was “walked” upon in a trough of water and “fullers earth”. This is a step in woollen clothmaking which involves the cleansing of cloth (particularly wool) to eliminate oils, dirt, and other impurities, and to make it thicker. I wonder if the women did this bare foot to get a free pedicure! This process was later mechanised with the introduction of water wheels driving “fulling stocks”, these were wooden hammers which raised and dropped into the fulling mixture.



The Big Lodge in Yarrow Valley Country Park

The other mill was a water powered corn mill. The tenant farmers of the estate were obliged to take their corn to be ground into flour at the mill. Upstream near Birkacre Manor was a third corn mill. The mills remained in operation during the 16th and 17th centuries. Several coalmines were established during the 1500s and 1600s.

The large weir was where the water was drawn from the river to feed the various industrial processes downstream. It was also the gathering place for walkers and people enjoying picnics etc. Today people gather to watch the ‘salmon leap’ through the fish pass - a ladder to help fish migrate upstream.

In the 1700s all spinning and weaving was undertaken by hand at home as a domestic industry. The “Factory System” arrived at Birkacre in 1777 when Richard Arkwright leased a factory, installed and made use of his water frame. Many groups tried to stop the spread of the “factory system” and “machine breakers” roamed the country smashing up “patent engines” which were putting domestic trade out of business. There was a riot at Birkacre in October 1779 and after four days the mob had destroyed the inside of the mill. The machines, made with wooden frames, were used to set fire to the premises and the mill was totally consumed by flames. At least one of the rioters was killed.

In the early 1800s a new mill was built for textile finishing namely calico printing, dyeing and bleaching. Steam power replaced waterpower and a private coal mine was opened. There was a mining accident around 1850 when several children workers were killed. In 1939 the colliery and mills closed, and all the adjoining land became derelict. Usually nature reserves are maintained by wildlife and environmental charities, but Yarrow Valley is owned by Chorley Council who in the 1980s obtained derelict land grants to restore the former mill lodges and create the Yarrow Valley Country Park, a 700-acre parkland.



The Weir and Fish Pass on the River Yarrow

Barbara S

A walk across Limestone

This is a circular walk visiting both Hutton Roof Crag and Farleton Fell, both areas which I described in an earlier issue. The start points can be either in the village of Hutton Roof or at Plain Quarry Car Park. The latter can be found on the minor road which leaves the A6070 before entering Burton-in-Kendal, signed Hutton Roof and Whittington.

This area has many paths crossing the limestone pavements that become very slippery and treacherous when wet, so choose a day with a good forecast, or you may end up lying on your back looking up at the underside of a yellow rescue helicopter.

Leave Plain Quarry via the gate at the rear, to follow the beaten path into the woods. As the path climbs there are good views of Silverdale and Morecambe Bay to the left. After a tunnel-like avenue between trees bear right to the edge of the wood, and over a stile onto the open fell, then through a wall stile. The South West summit trig. point lies ahead at 274 metres and affords a fine viewpoint to of Ingleborough's dark prow prominent. This area is called Ploverlands- none were seen on either of our visits to the area.



The Trig Point on Ploverlands

From here we follow a path north west through tricky clints and grykes with scrub everywhere. The path winds between shoulder-high limestone rocks over Uberash Breast and becomes tricky before joining a distinct track, which is followed, descending through bracken to meet a minor road. There is parking here, but only for one or two cars. Crossing the road, the route now joins the Limestone Link footpath, which passes between Holmepark Fell on our right, and Clawthorpe quarries on the left. After a mile and as the path descends, look for a path on the right, which sets off uphill, with Holmepark Fell now on the right. The Lancaster canal, A road and M6 motorway are visible to the left. This is a steady climb with many well-placed rocks near the top where a lunch stop could be made. Continuing through the wall we take a slight descent and then a final climb up to Farleton Knott itself. The panoramic view takes in the Lakeland Fells and Pennines on one hand, with the Silverdale Hills and Morecambe Bay on the other.



Retracing our route to the stile follow the wall around, staying on the grassy plateau we pass odd erratic boulders of sandstone, transported here by ancient glaciers. To our left in the valley is Lupton Beck and the hamlet of Newbiggin. We continue a steady descent across Newbiggin Crag to finally return to the minor road, crossing slightly to the East of our previous path.

Cross the road and follow the Limestone Link path, it is more obvious here, being well used, which takes us into the village of Hutton Roof. Entering the village, bear right down the road, shortly on the left is a round yellow enamelled AA sign, quite a rarity these days. It names the village and distance to London-252 miles. At the end of the village a sign to Crag House is now our route, through the restored houses of Low House. The lane is very pleasant as it skirts the National Nature Reserve of Park Wood.

Interestingly, we are walking almost on top of the Thirlmere Aqueduct at this point. The give-aways are the small metal gates between each field. There are several springs issuing here, where the limestone rests on impervious gritstone. Over a stile, cross a stream, and go below a ruined limekiln, and along a broad smooth shelf, keeping left of Cockshott Hill. Join a rough lane which leads through the farmyard of Crag House and onto the road, turn right and walking for a few minutes eventually leads back to Plain Quarry Car Park.

This walk is 7.5 miles in length and crosses one of the most impressive areas of limestone habitats in Britain. The top of the fell is recognisable as it is the section you can see from the motorway.



Farleton Knott from the motorway

Alan R

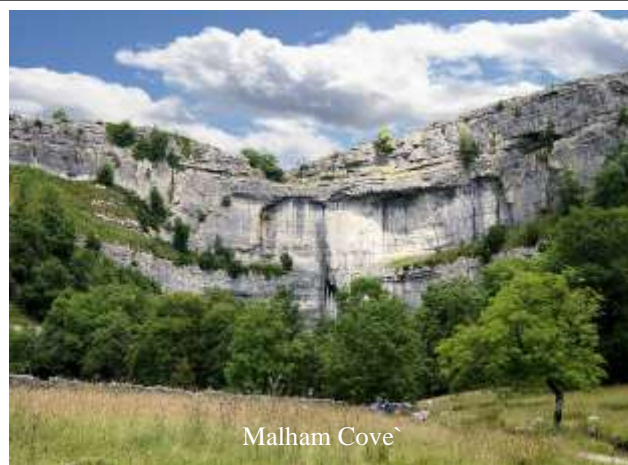
Malham Cove

Can there be any ramblers or even Sunday strollers in the North West who have not visited Malham Cove? A tourist hot spot, a honey pot and favourite of geography field trips, but Malham itself is best to be avoided on sunny weekends and Bank Holidays.

Malham probably started life about 1300 years ago with a settlement on the present green. A few centuries later the village was divided into two when the beck formed the boundary between Fountains Abbey estate and the Bolton Priory estate. After Henry VIII dissolved the monasteries, between 1536 and 1541, the village saw more prosperity with stone-built properties forming the core of the village today. In 1636 the humped back bridge which spans the river was built – although today it has been widened and upgraded.

Leaving the village along the left hand road, a path on the right takes you straight to the cove. Vertical cliffs of white limestone cut an arc through the grass slopes creating a natural amphitheatre. The cove is exactly 70 m in the centre, where the crest is nicked by a small dry valley, on either side the cliffs rise another 10m where grassy screes mask the base. The cove is 200m wide. Seen for the first time, it is impressive. OK – whenever you see it, it still is impressive. However, the origin on the cove is still open to debate. At least part of it is a dry waterfall (more about that later!), cut years ago when water flowed overground not underground. It is likely that most of the rock removed from the foot of the cove was scoured away by Ice Age glaciers.

Along the path to the Cove, evidence of farming history can be seen in the surrounding fields, with dry stone walls dating back to the Enclosures Act of 1773 and horizontal terraces built to improve the land approximately 1000 years ago. Viewed from above in evening sunlight evidence of Celtic enclosure can also be detected.



Malham Cove

Steps on the left take you up onto the limestone pavement on top of the cove, with its clints (the slabs) and grykes (the fissures). Take care, these can be wet and slippery and loose blocks wobble beneath your boots. Here wildflowers can grow in the dark, damp grykes away from hungry sheep, if you are incredibly lucky you might find some wild strawberries.

On the 6th December 2015 following Storm Desmond, a waterfall once again flowed over Malham Cove. The first time in living memory, lasting only one day – for that short time Malham Cove became the highest single drop waterfall in the UK.

Malham Cove has been the setting for many film and TV programmes, of course Julia Bradbury has walked here, it has also been used for a Harry Potter film and a Wuthering Heights adaptation.

The river Aire has its source at nearby Malham Tarn, disappearing at “Water Sinks” about 1 mile before the top of the cove. A stream exits from the base of the cave – this is Malham Beck which runs through the village and joins Gordale Beck becoming the River Aire south of the village. Cave divers have been exploring Malham Beck as it exits the cove for over 30 years but have only discovered about 1 mile of passage all under water!!



My brother cave diving under Malham Tarn

If you visit the area at the right time – around June – you might be lucky enough to see the peregrine falcons who return each year to nest and rear young. The peregrines returned to Malham in 1993 and have hatched chicks 23 times. The RSPB keep a very close eye on them to ensure their protection. Although Covid put an end to the public being able to view the nest this year, two chicks safely fledged.

Jane C