

Ramblers Gems



A Spring Vale Rambling Class Publication

Volume 1, Issue 27

6th November 2020

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Current Restrictions

As you will all know by now the new government restrictions introduced in England on Thursday 5th November have placed us all into a second lockdown for 4 weeks. It is sad to say that we must cancel our winter season walk activities for the rest of this year. The situation will be reviewed in the New Year when revised guidelines are published.

This means the following walks scheduled for:
7th November commencing from Burrs Country Park
21st November from Rivington
5th December from Brinscall
are now all **cancelled**.

The Christmas Meal arranged for the Rock at Tockholes on the 12th December is also cancelled.

As we enter this second lockdown it is still especially important that we all continue to exercise and walking is an ideal way. We may not be able to go out as a group, but we can still undertake independent walking, either with the people you live with, people within your support bubble or with one other person. We are in fact encouraged to do so.

So, just as a little reminder this is what it means for you. UK guidelines for exercise are 150 minutes a week moderate physical activity or 75 minutes a week vigorous physical activity. This equates to participating in a minimum of 30 minutes of moderate exercise five times a week. This will help prevent heart disease, type 2 diabetes, stroke, asthma and some cancers. This could be as simple as taking a short walk around the streets where you live or through the local park. This short break will help you to clear your head, supply the lungs with air and provide oxygen to the brain. The exercise also works the bodies muscles and keeps bones and joints strong.

If you have the time and can take a longer walk during the week, then the benefits will be even greater. A five or six mile walk will stretch your legs and allow the heart to pump that little bit harder. If you are used to always walking with a group and being led around then venturing out on your own can be a bit daunting. The way to start is to consider an area that you are familiar with and then expand out and explore. There are many excellent books of local walks available that provide a detailed written description of the walk. These walks can be undertaken without expert knowledge of map reading or compass work.

Michael C

Slow Ways

A network of 7,000 walking routes connecting Britain's towns, cities and villages for the first time ever has been created—and it will be perfect for ramblers looking to explore the country by foot. This new project named Slow Ways, was created by geographer and explorer, Dan Raven-Ellison. The purpose of the Slow Ways is to inspire and support more people to get out and about walking and to discover new routes between towns. It is expected that many people will rediscover footpaths that our ancestors once used to walk to work, to visit places of worship or just to walk to the next village. These routes are not new routes but ones that will be rediscovered in the hope that it will promote slower types of travel.

The car shoulders much of the blame for peoples lack of walking as it has distorted our perception of distance and disturbs our quiet lanes and sunken roads that once would only have shown evidence of footprints and hoofprints. Yet in these strange COVID times there has never been more of a need for these ancient pedestrian routes. At a time when we are facing both a physical and a mental health crisis, whilst running alongside climate and nature emergencies, the Slow Ways routes appears to be a perfect solution. It is returning walking from just being a recreation to a practical, cash-saving mode of transport.

Volunteers from all over the UK have been working on this project, creating thousands of walking routes stretching over 65,000 miles. It is intended to show that people on foot will be able to use the daisy chain-like routes in order to travel across the country, calling in on landmarks, exploring quaint villages and taking routes they've never discovered before. The difference this time is that it will be undertaken by walking. Once the project is completed it is envisaged that it will be possible to pull up a map on your smart phone or tablet and plan a route between two points from which you will be able to follow directions, turn by turn. This would be used in a similar way to what is currently available for the motorist or pedestrian using their GPS to navigate on the road between destinations or to locate a particular place within a town.

Working in conjunction with Ordnance Survey, each Slow Way will be plotted on the OS maps platform and then published freely online, creating a database of routes that can be used and will enable people to walk to their nearest village, town or city.

Michael C

Too Much Drainage

Most “Darreners” will have walked on Darwen Moors at some time or another and many will have been irritated by the numerous boggy paths when water appears to run from the land onto the footpath. It may seem obvious that increased drainage would be a solution, but the natural ecosystem of a moorland is a wet peatland interspersed by extensive pools of standing water.

Many local people will be aware of the story of a few local men staging a trespass during the 19th century, which resulted in the London High Court case that finally lead to freedom of the moors thus enabling townfolk to have access to freely walk over 25 acres of urban common land. During the previous centuries, the moors had been developed for grouse shooting by landowners who had restricted local access apart from miners working the many pits in the area. In order to develop grouse shooting, the landowner decided to put in extra drainage channels to reduce the wetness of the moors. This had the effect of causing torrents of water to cascade off the moors during heavy rain, damaging paths and tracks.

The natural state of affairs is for water to accumulate on the moorland tops and for the water to slowly drain down natural water courses. The boggy moors and standing water is a vital habitat for waterfowl and wading birds. It is the artificial draining of the moors which leads to boggy paths. Some recent work has been carried out in a process called “grip blocking” to restrict and slow down the flow of water from the moors.

Tony C



My Days of Rock

It was in the late 50's when my interest and fascination for climbing and in particular 'rock' climbing began. It all started when I was hill walking with two good friends probably on moorland around Rivington, Winter Hill and Belmont. We were approaching 'Wilton' quarries when Ian said, 'I fancy rock climbing!' That was the start and the next few weeks found us early Sunday mornings on the train from Bolton bound for Manchester and on to Greenfield near Oldham. We then completed the long walk up the Chew Valley to Wimberry Rocks or Dovestones in the Dark Peak where the three of us cut our teeth on these rocks, honing our climbing and rope techniques sometimes in the company of the great Joe Brown (climber not musician).



Wimberry Rocks above the Chew Valley Derbyshire

From those early days we progressed to travelling to the Lake district or North Wales. The trip to the Lakes would involve the train to Windermere then a bus journey to Dungeon Ghyll and the Langdale Pikes where we tackled routes on Bowfell, Gimmer Crag, Raven Crag and many others. In North Wales it would be routes on Snowdon, Tryffan or the Horseshoe or just on Idwal Slabs, easy but great for confidence building.

We eventually decided (well I did) that we should attempt a Scottish winter climbing expedition. I had been reading Mountaineering in Scotland by WH Murray and was eager to attempt some of the climbs described in his book. We were fortunate in that Ian's parents had a relation who ran the Ballachulish Hotel in Glencoe and so arrangements were made for us to spend two weeks at the hotel (special rates, i.e. cheap).

I think it was around the first week in February when we set off in Ian's first car, a Triumph Spitfire, not the most ideal vehicle for carrying three bodies plus gear for two weeks of mountaineering, but beggars can't be choosers. Our climbing gear consisted of two, hundred foot lengths of cable rope, some lighter weight rope for slings and making Prusik loops for ascending the rope, and we each had invested in an ice axe and crampons plus cleats for going around the soles of our Army and Navy boots.

We spent a glorious two weeks in Glencoe from dawn to nearly dark climbing or attempting to climb as many of the Murrays and co routes as possible. These included – Curved Ridge and Crowberry Gully on the Buachaill Etive Mor, The lost valley and Stob Coire nan Lochan, Aonach Duhb and many others. The highlight of these two weeks for me would have to be our winter traverse of the Aonach Egach Ridge, arguably the finest ridge walk in the UK.



Aonach Egach Ridge in Glencoe

Since then I have climbed many times in Glencoe but for me that first foray onto the magnificent Scottish peaks with worthy climbing companions was the most memorable.



Buachaill Etive Mor Glencoe

Alan S

Rivington Gardens

When was the last time you had a visit to Rivington Gardens? If the answer is not for a long time, then I think on your next visit you will be in for a big surprise! Spring Vale Ramblers over the years have enjoyed walking through the Gardens on route to destinations such as the Pike or Winter Hill, but I would recommend that you go and take some time to explore the many paths and features that can be found. The paths twist and turn as you slowly climb up through the Gardens and as you round that next corner, new delights will reveal themselves.

In 2016, the Rivington Heritage Trust, successfully secured £3.4 million of Heritage Lottery Funding as part of a three year £4.2 million restoration package to conserve and revitalise the Gardens. The plan was to concentrate on stabilising and preventing any further decay of the existing structures, allowing them to be enjoyed by all.

The Gardens contain 11 Grade II listed structures including the Pigeon Tower, the Seven Arch Bridge and five summerhouses. Each have undergone a complete facelift during the capital work.

The Italian and Japanese Lakes have been drained, desilted and re-lined before being refilled, thus ensuring their future long term. A comprehensive programme of paths and drainage work is being undertaken to improve access around the gardens. A lot of the work has been carried out with the help of conservation volunteer groups.

Rivington Gardens was one of a series of three major private gardens produced by Thomas Hayton Mawson in collaboration with the industrialist and philanthropist William Hesketh Lever, Lord Leverhulme. Lord Leverhulme was the soap magnate and founder of Lever Brothers (now Unilever) The Rivington site was purchased by Lever in 1899 as a parcel of land which included the area now occupied by Lever Park to the west.



Lever had already formulated ideas on how the grounds might be developed and in 1901 a single-storey wooden bungalow called 'Roynton Cottage' and intended for weekend visits and shooting parties was designed and built by Lever's school friend Jonathan Simpson. In 1905 Lever met Mawson who collaborated with him in the design of the gardens over the period 1906-22. However, others were also involved in the design including Thomas's son, Edward Prentice Mawson who undertook the overall design and in the latter years was as much responsible for the project as his father. It was the firm of James Pulham & Son who, in 1921, were responsible for the Japanese style garden and the steep and rugged ravine with waterfalls. Lever himself also influenced the gardens' layout, designing the seven-arched bridge across Roynton Lane.



In 1913 the bungalow was destroyed in an arson attack by the suffragette Edith Rigby. When rebuilt in stone it was a place for entertaining with a circular ballroom, glass-roofed pergola and winter garden. Following Lever's death in 1925 the house and gardens were purchased by Bolton brewer John Magee. After Magee's death in 1939 the site was acquired by Liverpool Corporation and in 1948 the bungalow and four entrance lodges were demolished and the gardens became open to the public. In 1974 the site passed to the North West Water Authority following local government reorganisation. Rivington Gardens was first registered within the Historic Parks and Gardens Register at Grade II on 1 April 1986. The estate is now owned by United Utilities who with the help of the Rivington Heritage Trust are undertaking the mammoth task of restoration.

The gardens can be accessed from car parks off the Belmont to Rivington road or at Great House Barn. The whole area around Rivington is extremely popular and these car parks get extremely busy, so plan your next visit soon and enjoy this wonderful place.

Michael C

Awe Walking

As we are now in another lockdown our walks are limited and local – or walkles (a local walk!) as they are known in my house, well known walking routes may become a bit boring and familiar. Why not try some “awe” walking. A lot of ramblers are already doing this without knowing.

A new study found that weekly 15-minute "awe walks" have positive effects on mental health. Volunteers reported higher levels of gratitude and compassion after eight weeks of these short walks. Researchers believe this low-cost intervention activity could help prevent cognitive decline in older adults. So, anything that might help increase positive mental health and delay any onset of Alzheimer's is worth trying. A somewhat vague emotion, **awe**, generally is defined as the sense that you are in the presence of something larger and more consequential than yourself and that this something is mysterious and meaningful.

An “awe walk” is a stroll in which you intentionally shift your attention outward instead of inward. So instead of thinking about work, family issues, Christmas or worries about the ‘virus’ you are encouraged to notice small things on your walk, e.g. a new unusual plant, colours of nature etc. small items such as moss covered walls or trees, try to soak up the environment, the architecture. These feelings of awe can boost positive emotions such as gratitude and compassion according to a study published last September in the journal *Emotion*. In the study, 60 older adults took weekly 15-minute “awe walks” for eight weeks. Half of the participants was randomly assigned to a simple walk group. The other half was placed in an awe walk group, in which researchers described the emotion of awe and suggested the walkers try to experience that emotion as they strolled.



The study recommended that at the end of the walk, each person took a ‘selfie’ and then compared these after 8 weeks. Those selfies from the ‘awe’ walks showed the person becoming less prominent in the photos as the weeks progressed, with the picture focussing more on the landscape etc. Also, it was noticeable that their smiles got bigger.



Spring Vale Ramblers have an extra opportunity. We live close to woods and moorland allowing us to get out into such a diverse countryside and experience an awe walk for ourselves. Even urban walks have some areas of awe in them, look for the differing colours in the autumnal plants in gardens, lichen on brickwork, fancy brickwork or tiles, or even graffiti that makes you smile.



Jane C