

Ramblers Gems

A Spring Vale Rambling Class Publication

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Current Restrictions

It is clear that Corona virus has not gone away, and we need to continue to help control the virus to save lives. Although there are some changes to government guidance, the lockdown is still in force across the UK and the advice continues to be to stay at home as much as possible.

There are however depending on whether you live in England, Wales or Scotland some differences in government advice as outlined below.

In England, from Wednesday 13 May:

- You can exercise outdoors as often as you like alone, or with members of your household.
- You can also exercise with one other person from outside your household, while still keeping two metres apart.
- You may drive to outdoor open spaces, irrespective of distance, but should follow social distancing guidance whilst you are there.

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Wild and Remote Places

The Forest of Bowland is an area in Lancashire that we have walked within for many a year and stretches from Pendle Hill over the high fells to as far as Lancaster and the River Lune.

The northern edge is bounded by the elegant River Lune with its great oxbow at Crook. The River Hodder cuts through the Forest in a southerly direction. It rises high above Stocks Reservoir and winds its way slowly passing the quaint villages of Newton, Dunsop Bridge and Whitewell. The River Ribble also flows through the Forest from the northern reaches above Ribblehead, and then in between the wide valley devoted to pastoral farming bordered by the Fells above Waddington and Pendle Hill.

The Forest of Bowland has some wild and remote places to explore and discover. Throwing ourselves into new experiences makes us happier and healthier and new adventures can bring us an enormous sense of freedom. Here are 4 places that when we are able are well worth seeking out.

Stocks Reservoir - is a vast shallow reservoir surrounded by woodland and low hills. It lies to the north of Slaidburn and good paths make circumnavigation easy.

The Great Stone of Fourstone – is an erratic boulder so large that a staircase has been carved up one side. On the top are to be discovered ancient cup marks. This mighty stone lies on the roadside to the south of Bentham.



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Please remember that when you are walking in England you should:

- Be sensitive to rural communities if considering travelling further from home in order to walk.
- Avoid activities that may result in injury or require emergency services support, especially in remote locations.
- Be aware that popular locations like National Parks or the coast may be very busy, making social distancing difficult.
- Plan ahead, as some sites and facilities may be closed or have restrictions.
- Respect the rules in Scotland and Wales and do not travel to different parts of the UK.

In many cases, the best option will be to stay close to home and explore the local footpaths in your area.

Poets Corner

Life

How many stories are there to tell
of peoples version of a living hell?
To some it may be being alone,
for others, being trapped inside their home.
Afraid to join in, afraid to share
in case their feelings are laid bare.
The world is full of pain and shame,
some unintended, most for gain.
The old lady beaten for fifty pounds.
The child who dares not make a sound.
What makes people happy or sad?
What will make them good or bad?
One life is given, that's all you have
So, grab each day with open arms.
Have no regrets, and still the qualms.
The indecisions, the rights and wrongs.
Go with your heart, let feelings show.
Then one day the world might know
that life is good, the future bright.
God bless and keep you safe each night.

Maggie

Millers House Millstones – there is no house to be seen for miles around at this remote location high on the moors, only a rocky outcrop of the underlying gritstone and several abandoned carved millstones from an old quarry. This site is reached from a path emanating from Tower Lodge on the Trough of Bowland road.



Bleasdale Wood Henge - The outline of this Bronze Age wood circle is now defined by concrete posts, but still captures a true sense of mystery and awe in its remote surroundings. Cremated human remains were found in pottery urns in a shallow grave. To find follow the path after the school at Bleasdale.

Renewed Life

The rain falls softly: then falls hard,
Hitting the trees and bouncing from leaves.
Soaking the ground and all it contains.
Giving new life, refreshing the old,
Releasing the fragrance of life itself.
Inhale deeply the smell of wet, moist soil,
Knowing that now it is easier to toil.
The farmer sows seed into damp ground.
Knowing that new life will slowly emerge.
Just as mankind renews life on earth.

Maggie

I walk

I walk, I talk, I walk a little more
I walk, I see, I walk a little more
I walk, I listen, I walk a little more
I walk, I walk and I walk a little more.

Mike

Musings on a walk to Houghton Bottom

Our antidote to the lockdown has been daily local walks. As the lockdown restrictions tentatively started to ease, we indulged ourselves in an 8 mile walk this week encompassing many of our favourite spots in our local area. The starting point for the walk was home just a minutes walk from the site of the old Feniscowles railway station just off Livesey Branch Road. At the corner of Stockclough Lane are the remnants of the old railway line stone bridge and the beginning of our journey. A rail disaster was averted here in 1956 by the incumbent signalman Mr Alec Radnedge who managed to raise the alarm and stop the oncoming trains slipping into the Leeds Liverpool canal following a massive landslide.

From the site of the former railway station we head in the direction of Feniscowles along Livesey Branch Rd to join the Leeds Liverpool canal. We travel a short section of the canal in the direction of Blackburn to the next bridge exiting the canal at Livesey library. Leaving the canal behind we head to Preston Old Rd, where we followed this road for a short distance towards Blackburn before turning left into the Crescent and picking up the Witton Weavers Wheel trail over the railway line and down into Witton Park.

Once in Witton Park we decided to take the long slow climb up through Crow Wood. After passing through the wood we cross the road to take the archway in the wall to our right to ascend Billinge Wood. This climb is the steepest section of the walk, the effort expended is amply rewarded by the stunning views once through the woodland. Upon reaching the summit of the woods we exit left into Yellow Hills which take its name from the gorse bushes that flower on the hills.

These woods and hills have many a tale to tell I'm sure but one of my favourites is that during the Boer War film pioneers Mitchell and Kenyon staged re-enactments of the war in Billinge Wood and on Yellow Hills as they couldn't afford to send a cameraman to the scene of the action to make their much sought after films.

Looking to the right after leaving Billinge Wood the Clog and Billy Cock (formerly known as the Bay Horse Inn) comes into view. The area between the woods and the pub was once a football pitch and although the spectators probably came for the football I'm sure one or two must have enjoyed the amazing views especially if the match was a little slow. Carrying on across the field following the well trodden

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path the Alfred Wainwright memorial directional plaque appears. On a clear day the views at this point are quite spectacular and have been very cathartic particularly during the lockdown. If you look closely at the plaque it appears Blackpool tower and Preston North End have been inscribed on it the wrong way around.



Slowly we follow the path downwards towards Pleasington watching the spires of St Mary & St John the Baptist RC church (Pleasington Priory) come closer. The Priory was built for John Francis Butler of Pleasington Old Hall and was completed in 1819.



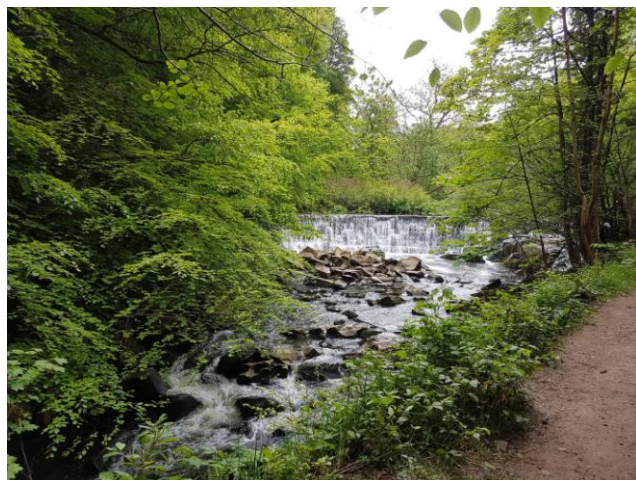
Across from the Priory is the Butlers Arms public house, we walk down the side of the pub through Priory Close to descend into a valley that leads past the bottom of the golf course and down to the River Darwen. Upon reaching the river, turn right and follow the path into the hamlet of Houghton Bottoms.

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Before reaching the hamlet you get your best views of the rocky bluff on top of which sits Hoghton Tower hidden from view by the trees.

Hoghton Tower is still occupied by the de Hoghton family whose ancestors came over with William the Conqueror. It is said that it is here in 1617 that James I knighted a particularly flavoursome loin of beef hence sirloin. The tower has also been used for state visits. In 2006 the US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice visited and it's been the backdrop for TV shows such as Peakay Blinders, Life on Mars and the Last Tango in Halifax to name, but a few.

Once at Hoghton Bottoms you cross the River Darwen via a narrow green iron bridge then follow the road turning left leaving the river for a short distance. As the road starts to rise, take the left turn and follow the road passing cottages and gardens until you eventually come to an impressive railway viaduct and rejoin a riverside path. Follow the well trodden path along the river to a weir. On wet days the weir is spectacular in full flow even if the walking is less attractive on those days. At the weir a recent edition is a fish pass which has been successful used by brown trout heading upstream.



After leaving the weir following the obvious path along the river and over footbridges, you emerge into a large field which provides, on a good day, a superb backdrop for local wildlife spotting. A couple of our favourites have been watching the deer playing and a heron in full flight following the river. At the end of the field you enter a wood and at this time of year you are treated to a magnificent display of bluebells. At the top of the wood you exit via a swing gate and head across three fields via a couple more swing gates to Hillock Farm. Turn right down the farm track which leads to Moulden Brow and back onto the Preston Old Rd.

On reaching the road now turn left and start walking back in the direction of Blackburn. Looking down to your left you see the remains of Feniscowles Old Hall originally owned by the wealthy mill owning Fielding family. The River Darwen that flows past the hall was described in 1866 as black as ink and stinks abominably. The family unsurprisingly left the hall in 1879 for Scarborough naming their new residence Feniscowles House hoping I'm sure to leave the polluted river behind them. Ironically their mills were part of the pollution problem. The hall briefly became a school to train catholic boys for the priesthood but after 7 years it closed.

The final leg of our journey takes us across the road and back up Livesey Branch Rd past Feniscowles recreation ground and the entrance to the former star paper mill before crossing over the canal and arriving back at our starting point.

Stephanie

And I Quote

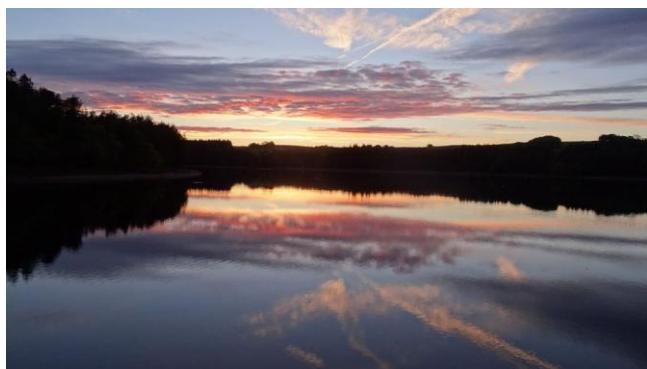
“A morning walk gives the body a chance to forgive the trials and tribulations of yesterday, to shed its rubbish and mental clutter”.

“Walking gets the feet moving, the blood moving, the mind moving. And movement is life”.

“Walking is the world's oldest exercise and today's modern medicine”.

First walks with SVRC

My first walks with SVRC were Tuesday evening ones. I look forward to these every year between May and September. So I thought I would share a walk and photograph from 17th May 2017. Last night's lovely Spring Vale Rambling Class walk has some wonderful memories. The track through cotton grass all wavering and glistening in the late sun, nine people looking for stones in a stone circle, a trig point, a skylark swooping, magnificent clear views to the Welsh mountains, Manchester, Rochdale, the Peak District etc.. and a beautiful sunset over Entwistle Reservoir. With leader Michael Counter. Just 4.2 miles but a very memorable walk.



Barbara



Martholme Viaduct

Journey into the Past

As a modern day Rambler of the North West, you will be aware of campaigns to try to establish an official passage over the River Calder at the Martholme viaduct.

From this point and looking east down the valley you can clearly see Martholme Manor House. What you may not be aware of is the history of this Grade 1 listed medieval building standing on the banks of the River Calder. Originally built in the 13th Century and partly rebuilt in 1577, this building had a gatehouse, a moat, was home to the High Sheriff of Lancashire in 1563 and formed part of the land attached to the property which was sold off to pay the heavy fines imposed upon the Hesketh family after the Civil War. Their only crime was to be Catholic at the wrong time in history!

But I digress. This small area is rich in history from across the centuries and if we jump forward in time to the year 1905, our fellow Spring Vale Ramblers undertook an eight mile walk from Nelson to Chatburn which included a journey on the Great Harwood loop of the railway. This was changed forever in 1957 when this section of the line was closed. I would like to share with you a brief visual recollection of this part of their journey which recognises a sense of mystery to their day.

“Peeps into nature’s beauties may be enjoyed immediately after leaving Great Harwood, and these beauties seem to converge into one fairy scene, where the old Manor House at Martholme keeps vigil over the confines of the Calder just at the point where the viaduct leads the train into the sylvan glories of Read Woods. As the Rambler is whirled along he must possess a very quick optic to discern the Calder in its winding down the valley on the right, and also catch a glimpse of the more wooded vales on the left towards Boggart’s Glen and Cock Bridge”

Although we may never experience “the snorting of the engine” as we are “ascending the steep gradients” we can at least share with Mr J.T. Fielding our beautiful surroundings by experiencing our heritage through their eyes even though these may have evolved and changed over the years.

Eleanor