

Ramblers Gems



A Spring Vale Rambling Class Publication

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The Latest Restrictions

The official statement is that rambling group walks can restart in all tiers from Wednesday 2 December 2020.

Outdoor physical activity is exempt from restrictions affecting medium, high and very high tiers. Ramblers group walks are also exempt from the “rule of six” in accordance with [UK Government guidance](#). Organised walking is exempt from the latest restrictions, because as a group we met the protocols, by having put extra measures in place to reduce the risks of COVID-19.

Spring Vale Ramblers have taken the decision **not** to commence our walking programme until the New Year 2021.

The Christmas Lunch scheduled to be held on 12th December at the Rock Tockholes is also cancelled.

All our leaders have been pooling their ideas for next year’s walking syllabus and it is planned that this will be printed and available as usual in February 2021.

Michael C

The Joys of Winter Walking

The weather at the moment is turning cold and wintry and our motivation to get out walking can be reduced, but on those few days when the weather is suitable, when it is not raining, but cold, crisp and dry take the opportunity to go for a walk. Here are of some the reasons to enjoy a winter’s walk.

There can be no better feeling than to put on that thick snuggly fleece over the top of a warm jumper applying all the wicking, insulating and other water-repelling layers that are needed to keep out that cold wintry day. Once applied that feeling of “bring it on” seems to emanate as you step out on your journey. As the walk gets under way the thought of “I’m not sweating I’m glowing” overcomes you. For this is how we imagine ourselves- apple cheeked and all aglow from the exertion of our hobby. There is even that feeling of smugness as we don’t fear the peril of stepping in puddles, for we know that our boots have undergone a painstaking leather nourishment programme designed to keep out the water.

Part of the pleasure of walking at this time of year is that although your nose may feel cold there is the pride knowing that you have braved the day while others more coddled individuals have been stuck inside. As you walk along, clouds of breath fill the air, you are a dragon, a steam train or volcano. These pleasures are so much fun and remind oneself that at heart you are still not quite grown up.

There is nothing more enjoyable than opening a flask and pouring yourself a sweet coffee, a succulent Bovril or a fragrant chocolate and it still being hot hours since you made it.



Eleanor

An Irish Adventure

In 2016 the Walk this Way Choir based in Darwen decided to have an extended walking weekend to County Clare in the west of Ireland. So, along with 11 other members of the Choir, I was introduced to one of the world's finest scenic areas The Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark. In last week's edition I described the area, but this piece details the adventure.

An early morning minibus picked us up, whisking the party to a very busy Manchester Airport and after a 1hr 10min flight courtesy of Ryanair, we arrived at Shannon Airport. For a large international airport, it was eerily quiet in the early afternoon as all transatlantic flights are dealt with in the morning! Next part of the trip was via Lahinch in another minibus to arrive at Doolin and are soon allocated to our two B and Bs about 400yds apart. Quick to unpack, we decided to walk along the village main street to Fitz's pub where we met up with Bernard Delaney who was a local man and our guide. After the pub meetup there was still time for a walk in the afternoon sunshine down to the coast and crossing the limestone pavement was the order for the day. The route across the pavement was quite tricky, fortunately not wet. Continuing from the harbour the route now took us onto the long road running through the three communities of Doolin, - Roadford, Fitz's Cross and Fisher Street. Our return saw a quick change into 'socialising gear' and then we all met up at McDermotts for a meal and drinks. The traditional Irish music started around 9 p.m., but as we had all had a long day, we didn't linger for too long, cocoa time was 10. p.m.



On Friday after a great breakfast we collected our packed lunches, met up and walked to Fitz's where our organiser Mike had organised a minibus to take us to the Cliffs of Moher visitor centre. On the way we passed Doonagore Castle a 1970s reconstruction of a 15th C original and we noticed that the minibus was working hard on the long, winding climbs. The walk back to Doolin was along the cliff tops on the Wild Atlantic Way offering many opportunities for dramatic views. Although windy, it was a blue-sky day. The excellent packed lunches were eaten in a sheltered spot behind the usual dry-stone wall- quite like home. Back in Doolin, it was a little early for the pub, and 4 of us took a taxi to Doolin Cave. This was a typical limestone country cave system, with many levels and one spectacular 20 foot stalactite. Following the evening meal and drinks in Fitz's, with the music playing, I got into deep conversation with Bernard, our guide 'putting the world to rights' and midnight saw me creeping quietly back into the B and B!

Another super breakfast set us up for a busy Saturday. Walking to the harbour we got on a ship to view the Cliffs of Moher from the sea. It was a fine weather day with white clouds and brilliant blue sky and thankfully a moderate sea. Arriving back at Doolin harbour we transferred to a larger ship for the trip to Inisheer, the nearest of the three Aran islands. This ship was called 'Happy Hooker'- Hooker being the type of ship, and happy being the mood of all the passengers on this brilliant day.



We disembarked in Inisheer, and we headed off towards the ruins of O'Brien's Castle, passing a 13th C church recently excavated from beneath the sand dunes. We finally arrived at the lighthouse on the south side of the island. Nearby was the wreck of a ship, the Plassey, from 1960, which featured in the opening sequence of the 'Father Ted' series. (Craggy Island is NOT Inisheer). However, Inisheer is unique in that a lot of it is divided into small fields each bounded by a dry-stone wall. During the potato famine of the 1850s many Irish people left the mainland and came to the Aran islands, which were infection-free. The landowner gave (rented) each family a plot large enough to survive on, where they grew mainly potatoes and veg. We returned to Doolin on the 'Happy Hooker' which had visited the other two Aran islands before returning to the mainland. As we departed, a small light aircraft took off from the basic island airport heading for Galway, a 15 min flight. Food, drink and music were taken at McGanns, I think most of us managed to stay up until at least 10.30. pm

Sunday was our last day, spent packing, taking breakfast, and then enjoying a morning walk around some of the many narrow lanes surrounding Doolin. Although early, I persuaded a shop owner to open for us, so I could buy some souvenirs. Soon we were back at McGanns for a late lunch and more music before the return journey and we all arrived home safely between 01:00 and 02:00, with plenty of good memories of a superbly organised Irish experience.



Alan R

Great Walls of Yorkshire

There is probably no feature of the Yorkshire Dales that attracts the attention of visitors and ramblers alike, more than the drystone walls. They form crazy patterns around the villages, run along and across valleys, climb boldly up the fell sides and mark the line of ridges and of summits. They are called drystone walls because they are built entirely without mortar, their strength and durability the product only of the skill and craft of the people that built them.

Although there are records of some walling in the thirteenth century, the building of stone walls was not extensive until the sixteenth when it became custom for villagers to build around their holdings. The crazy pattern of small irregular fields now found around villages such as Malham is characteristic of this period. Most of the walls however were built in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries when vast areas of land were being enclosed by an Act of Parliament. The long straight walls of the open fell were the product of this legislation. The movement was not just confined to the Dales nor the area most affected, but the change must have been considerable.

The stone to build the wall was plentiful and near-to-hand in most areas of the Dales, but as approximately one ton of stone was needed for each square metre of wall, the work was hard and called for judgement to avoid unnecessary labour. A waller would usually work with an assistant one to each side of the wall, with their material stacked nearby. The job of building the walls was for the warmer months of the year for the cold winds, driving rain and snow made the work too difficult at other times.

The line of the wall would be marked out with pegs and string and if necessary, a trench was cut to receive a level and firm foundation of large and heavy stones. Upon this the wall was built, five or six feet high, the shape, size and direction being maintained by two A frames with straining cords between. The wall would be built sloping inwards towards the top for extra stability and two stones wide with the occasional through or tie stones inserted through the full width to bind them together. Small stones would be used to fill the gap in the centre and the sides. Finally, large flat stones were used at the top to level the wall before a coping or capping stone was added, made up of flat rounded stones placed on edge.



Michael C

Tower, Terraces & Tracks

I don't know whether the name Hiram B. Lansky means anything to anyone, but in October 1972 two years before amalgamating with Blackburn, The Darwen General Purpose and Development Committee received a letter from the said person who offered to buy Darwen Tower for £250,000. He planned to dismantle the tower stone by stone and rebuild it on his ranch in Saint Louis USA. Although it turned out to be a hoax, the uproar caused ensured that the tower would never leave its lofty windswept position. There also followed a genuine inquiry from an organisation in Missouri. The Darwen Borough Council promptly threw out this proposal as well.

Spring Vale Rambling Class regularly visit the terraced gardens at Rivington. The gardens are only a shadow of its former glory, but there is an ongoing rolling programme of restoration works to improve the appearance of the site. The gardens were designed by top industrialist Lord Leverhulme, who was quite progressive and ahead of his time. He built a village for his employees (Port Sunlight), which had all the modern amenities and campaigned for a 6-hour working day nationwide. It seems ironic, therefore, that he was targeted by suffragettes who burned down a bungalow that he had built within the terraced gardens. Although many people visit the terrace gardens, fewer venturer to the edge of the Lower Rivington Reservoir where Lord Leverhulme built a scaled down replica of Liverpool Castle. Alas it was never completed, although there is some speculation that it was never intended to be.



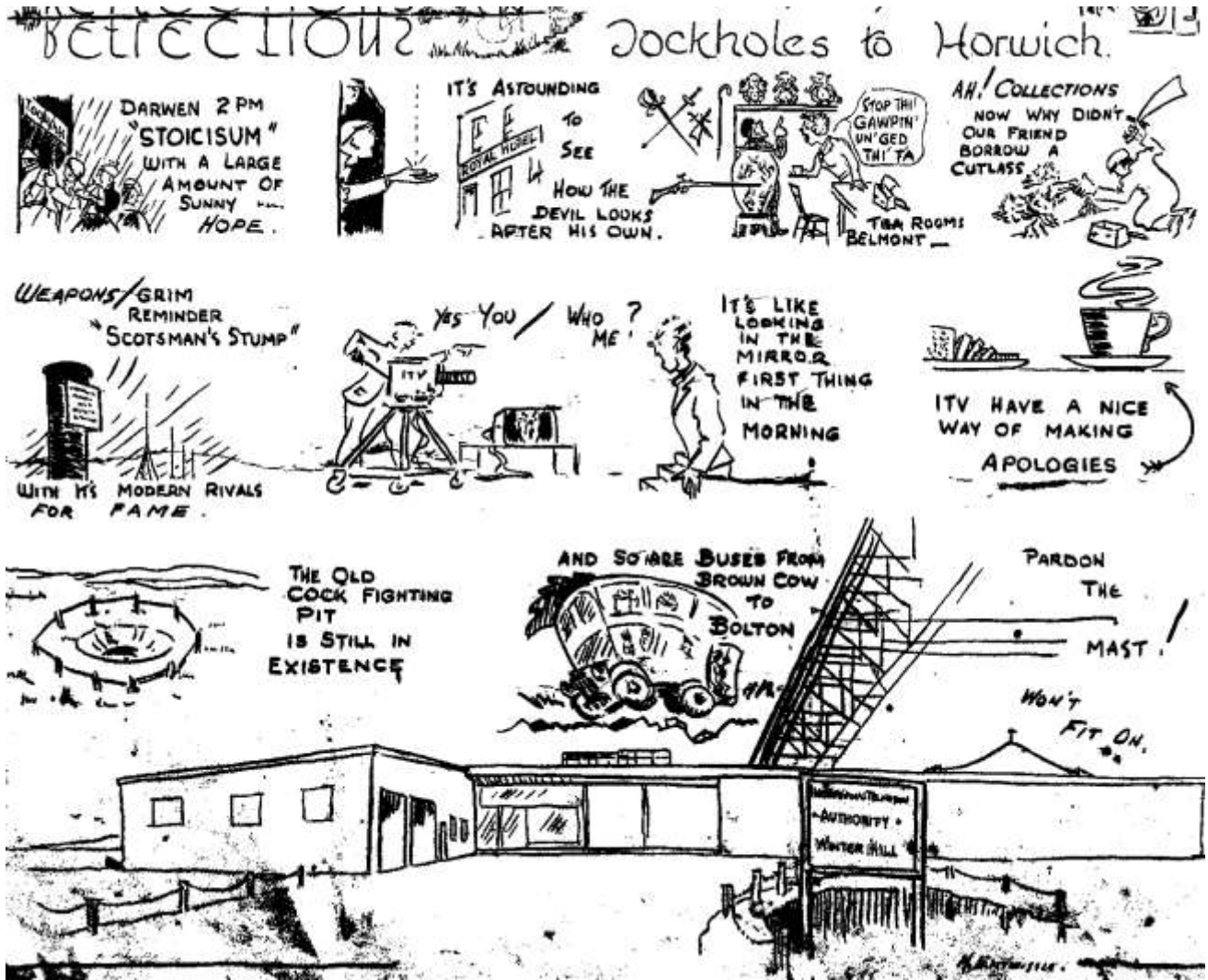
The Cross at Affetside

Our Rambling Class often visit the village of Affetside with its famous cross. The cross stands on the old Roman road joining Manchester with the roman fort at Ribchester and is said to mark the halfway point between London and Edinburgh. The Pack Horse Inn at Affetside recalls a later use of the roman road, when ponies transported goods from Lancashire to commercial centres at Manchester and Liverpool. Drove roads and tracks, once a vital network for trade, crisscross the West Pennine Moors that today make up many footpaths used by ramblers.

Tony C

Reflection on the Walk - Tockholes to Horwich

REFLECTIONS



The above is the third cartoon that was used in an exhibition staged throughout June 1985 within the Information Centre Sunnyhurst Wood Darwen. The Class had organised numerous events throughout that year to celebrate its 90th year since formation.

The image came to light as part of a school project prepared by Ann Lawrence, daughter of the late President Brian Lawrence. The cartoon was drawn by Mr H. Entwistle and reflects on a walk undertaken on Saturday 13th August 1960.

Michael C

These are the details for that walk from the 1960 syllabus.

Tockholes to Horwich 13th August 1960 Visit to Television Station Winter Hill

Via Royal Hotel, Stony Fold Brow, Lower Pasture Barn, Belmont Reservoir, Belmont, Coal Road Delf, Television Station, Scotchmans Post, Pike Cottage, Ormston Lane, Blackrod Reservoir, Horwich.

Walking Distance 10 miles

Corporation bus from Darwen Circus to Royal Hotel Tockholes at 2pm. Return by bus from Horwich to Bolton and Darwen. Tea at Belmont.

UK NATIONAL TRAILS QUIZ

The National Trails are long distance walking routes through some of the best landscapes in England and Wales - Scotland's equivalent paths are grouped and named separately. Have a go at this Quiz, originally compiled by HF Holidays, to see just how well you know these beautiful and varied routes.

5. **How many official national trails are there currently in England and Wales?**
A) 13 B) 15 C) 17 D) 19
6. **Which symbol is used to waymark the official national trails in England and Wales?**
A) Oak leaf B) Diamond C) Acorn D) Cairn
7. **What is Scotland's equivalent of the national trails in England and Wales called?**
A) The Great Trails B) The Great Walks
C) The National Walks D) The National Routes
8. **The route of which national trail follows Britain's oldest road?**
A) The Peddars Way B) The Ridgeway
C) The Cleveland Way D) The Cotswold Way
9. **If you had seen Helmsley Castle, the White Horse of Kilburn and Whitby Abbey, which trail would you have walked?**
A) Cleveland Way B) Yorkshire Wolds Way
C) Pennine Way D) Thames Path
10. **If you started with a pint in the Nags Head and finished with a drink at the Border Inn, you would have stumbled along which route?**
A) Offa's Dyke Path B) Hadrian's Wall Path
C) Pennine Way D) Glyndwr's Way
11. **Which of the national trails is the only one to follow a UNESCO World Heritage Site?**
A) Offa's Dyke Path B) Hadrian's Wall Path
C) The Ridgeway D) Glyndwr's Way
12. **Which of the National and Great Trails lets you walk coast-to-coast across a country?**
A) Hadrian's Wall Path B) Great Glen Way
C) Offa's Dyke Path D) All of the above

1. **Which of the National Trails, was the first to be opened, on April 24th 1965?**
A) Hadrian's Wall Path B) Offa's Dyke Path
C) The Ridgeway D) The Pennine Way
2. **Which of the national trails is the longest waymarked footpath?**
A) Thames Path B) Pennine Way
C) South West Coast Path
D) Pembrokeshire Coast Path
3. **Legend has it that King Arthur was born along the length of which national trail?**
A) Cotswold Way B) Thames Path
C) Yorkshire Wolds Way D) South West Coast Path
4. **What is set to be special about the National Trails' English Coast Path project?**
A) It'll be longer than America's Pacific Crest Trail
B) It'll be the longest coastal trail in the world
C) 2021 is the Year of the Coast to mark it opening
D) All of the above

For more about HF Holidays see the back page in the 2020 Season Programme.

Answers as always in the next issue



Barbara S