

Ramblers Gems

A Spring Vale Rambling Class Publication

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Our Early Years

The 23rd May 1896 was the first official ramble of the Class. The initial walk was from Spring Vale via the top of Sough tunnel, Grimehills Church and Wayho Fold returning by Yarsdale, Bent Hall and the Sough, a distance of 10.75 miles. The original format during the walk was to gather specimens on the Saturday and then to met once or twice in Spring Vale School during the following week to talk about their discoveries and put to practical use the findings of the previous Saturday's walk. Photographs would be taken of the various places visited and a Limelight Lantern was used to reproduce those pleasant summer outings during the winter evenings. Both old and young joined the Class and as time went on they included anyone interested in the work they were engaged in. It is recorded that in 1919 and twenty years since the formation of the Class Mr Jonathan Fielding the Secretary and leader of the Class had only missed seven of the organised walks. He also reported that a pleasant and

creditable feature was that during the whole of those twenty years he had not heard a single instance of uncouth word, of bickering and strife or anything to mar the brotherly aspect of the parties.

In the early years the Class did not publish a Syllabus, but arranged the rambles as the season progressed. As the numbers increased it was decided to publish the list of walks in the style of a small folding card, this also served as the membership card and cost the holder the sum of two pence, old money (equivalent to less than 1 pence today). Later on the card was enlarged into booklet form and gave valuable information on train and tram times, as well as the details for the forthcoming walks. The price was increased to sixpence (2.5 pence) and was a credential of membership. In the early days membership allowed each Rambler to bring one lady friend with him on Rambles open to Ladies. A rule not applied today as everyone is welcome.



Discovering old tracks and byways.

This is a linear walk that I enjoy and starts from the top end of the moorland village of Belthorn. I usually get dropped off in the village. If you live in or near Darwen this walk can be modified at several points to take you home.

Walk up through the village passing the Dog Inn on the right until you reach the bus shelter and turn down Bank Fold Lane. It is from this point that you get good views looking down over Lower Hoddlesden, Waterside and Eccleshill. In the far distance are Hoghton Towers and the River Ribble estuary. Descend the lane, which winds between several properties at Bank Fold to arrive at a T-junction where you turn right. In the past many of the properties in this area would contain a hand loom for weaving cloth, and this is evident by the window structure built to allow the maximum light into the houses. The route has become rougher underfoot but still is very good for walking. Continue down this track passing a small reservoir, run by United Utilities on your left. Our route now takes us to the right, by the side of Waterside Brook and after about a mile, Victoria Buildings at Waterside are reached. The old Co-Op building sits on the corner.



Old Co-op Building Waterside



Shaw's Office Block 1927

We now cross the road to travel along the bridleway passing Shaws of Darwen on the right, with its white office building constructed in 1927. The works, originally Shaw Glazed Tile Company, was founded by Arthur Gerald Shaw way back in 1897, using the local clay brought by horse and cart from the local coal mine, Belthorn Colliery. The bridleway, passing Higher Waterside Farm one of the oldest buildings in the area, climbs steadily towards Roman Road and the TV repeater towers on the ridge. Crossing over the road and onto the path at the left hand side of the tower, we walk down one field to reach the ruins of Princess Farm, before turning right. Follow a well worn path across the area known locally as "Baileys Field" to emerge between houses onto Hawthorne Avenue. The way continues straight on and at the end of this road, turn left onto Holden Fold and Moor Lane and continue on keeping a look out for the small lay-by and widening grass verge on the right hand side. Take a footpath up the steps, between houses No. 35 & 37. The route in the next section of the walk is all on permissive paths.

This path leads along by the Square Meadow recreation field. Turn left at the kissing gate, and then walk around the football field to pass in front of the pavilion and out by the second metal kissing gate ahead. The route now goes straight ahead crossing a large field and into a second field bearing to the right to a 5-bar gate. You now are entering Polyphemus Wood, planted by The Woodland Trust in 2005 to mark the bicentenary

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of the Battle of Trafalgar and is named after one of the ships in Admiral Nelson's fleet. This broadleaf woodland is planted with 15,000 trees includes oak, ash, alder, birch, rowan, hazel, hawthorn and holly. If you turn left at this point it brings you to Knowl Lane and the Chapels Area, where there are various routes back down into Darwen.



My intended route is to turn right at this footpaths junction and for the rest of this walk it takes you away from Darwen and heads off towards Eccleshill and onto the Davy Field area. The route now traverses along the broad well used path around the edge and through the wood, until you are above Manor House Farm, don't climb the stile but continue around the edge of the wood. After approx 200 metres search carefully on your right for a stile, that will allow you to cross the trackbed of the old railway line to Huddlesden.

On the other side of the rail track climb a second stile into the field and turn immediately left to follow around the top edge of this field. Follow this wall until you can see a stile in the next field. Turn left immediately after the stile and follow the beaten track through the woodland to descend to Davyfield Brook. The ground in this area is littered with iron slag from the old iron works. This site formally known as Darwen Iron Company was erected in 1870, adjoined the railway at Goosehouse and had its own large sidings and shunting engine. The huge chimney dominated the skyline, but due to a decline in trade was demolished in 1936.

Follow the brook on your left to a stile and then climb the 26 steps which take you up to Roman Road at Davy Field Brew. Turning left and going under the motorway brings you to Davyfield Business Park and Blackamoor and onto Lower Darwen.

The total walking distance for my route from Belthorn is about 5 miles. The distance to the TV repeater mast at Sett End is about 2 miles and to Chapels 3.5 miles. The walk offers plenty of opportunity for splendid view across the Huddlesden and Darwen valleys with several ups and downs to negotiate along the way together with lots of interesting and informative local history.

Alan R



Local Views along the Walk

*There is not in the wide world, a valley so sweet,
As that vale in whose bosom the bright waters meet:
Oh! The last rays of feeling and life must depart,
Ere the bloom of that valley shall fade from my heart.*

An Evening Walk

It has been a long day but I need to get out by myself on an observational walk to see the sounds, the colours, the movement but above all to absorb Mother Nature's use of natural light and then log it all in my memory as she continues to shape the 3 dimensional distance and then bounce it all back to be recorded on my eyes.

So, tonight I will first head off down the eastern path. After passing the lofty waving spires of the bamboo on the edge of the small pond, a group of frogs are easily camouflaged, that's if they don't move quickly! They sit, watching the Hover Fly and the Blue Dragonfly, licking their lips and they are full of hope. Will they be lucky tonight with their supper?

The canopy above this section is full of Common Ash, Sycamore, Field Maple, Silver Birch with its striped dress reaching up white trunks heading towards the sky and Horse Chestnuts with their white candles having each flower dotted in the centre with a fine pink brush.

Heading North I slowly pass through arches of Apple Blossom resplendent and full of white flowers and Oregon Crab Apple with its promise of tasty Crab Apple Jelly later on in the year. The Wild Cherry are just starting to form their small and firm fruit and I finish off this section of my walk by passing through an archway of Damson trees. These heavily intermingling and overpowering group of plants all support each other as they continue to push upwards to the light but hiding under all this I stop to really take notice of what sits beneath. I notice the Wood Anemone, the last groups of Bluebells with these patches interspersed with Alliums wafting in the breeze, white, purple and pale pink Aquilegia giving added height. Clumps of highly coloured Azaleas together with an archway of pale Clematis gives way to the grassland which is dotted with daisies and buttercups.

I notice that this whole area is full of bees. But which are they? I remember now that bumble bees have robust bodies and are large in the girth while honey bees are more slender in the body and have fewer body hairs.

Looks like more honey later in the year. Large Craneflies better known as Daddy longlegs hover everywhere.

For the last section of my walk I decide to take the western path tonight. This is more commonly known as the Red Route going past Western Red Cedar, Norway Maple, Small Acers with some having their roots kept in the shade by the red leather colour of the curled up Choke Cherry. The whole area is highlighted with English Yew, Mountain Laurel and the Common Holly. At this time of the day the movement of the leaves together with the evening light make all the sections of the walk appear to be tumbling and dancing to get my attention. The evening breeze adds another level to the constantly changing picture as she introduces rustling sounds to the view.

I sit on a wall and decide to try to identify the birds by their sounds, not their shape. The Blackbird is easy with her loud and harsh chatter of alarm. Her call goes up at the end and finishes off in a trill sound. The Chaffinch has a loud "pink, pink" sound and she delicately ends her call with a flourish. The Blue Tit bird call sounds like a "see, see, see". The sheer number of Sparrows as they amass as one, chirrup and chatter as if they are forming gangs to play together and give me great delight as they take over areas of the different trees. This seems to give them great confidence. A Robin hops out from under the bushes and flies onto a large stone. It makes a fine and sharp "tic, tic, tic" ending with a warble as it declares its territory. A Collared Dove flys over me, lands high in the branches and announces itself by repeating its "coo, coo, coo". And above it all a pair of Magpies add to the rendition with their harsh "chak, chak, chak".

I realise that I have sat for too long. The cacophony of evening song is starting to die down and the sun is in its last stage of setting. The sky is ablaze with deep oranges, golds and purples. A fitting end to a perfect walk and I am still only in my garden. Oh well. Home for a Gin.

Eleanor



Lancashire Village Anagrams

Can you untangle the following letters to form the names of Lancashire villages? The answers will appear in the next edition.

Answer



Leways
Furrodf
Hghoont
Bctahrn
Gsitonien
Rraggimhs
Thelwneo
Tinngdwdao
Ootsnr
Beerritchs
Telbnom
Soontrc
Rolled
Hognal
Nimossento
Basnotlodes
Litwheewl
Taggale
Lenpotend
Nipghpci

The Written Stone

Our ramble on the 6th June this year would have been a joint celebration walk with our fellow local walking club, the Blackburn Rambling Association who are commemorating 90 years of walking. The walk was to commence in the village of Ribchester passing the Stydd church and following field paths to arrive at the mysterious Written Stone. It is thought that this 2.4 metre stone slab was placed here by Ralph Radcliffe following four deaths in his family – probably due to the plague during the 1600's. The passing of the years has seen the Written Stone subject may local legends, one of which tells of a farmer who once moved the stone into his dairy. It was to serve as a utility stand but any pots or pans placed upon it would shake, spill or topple off. When milk churns stood on it the milk it immediately turned sour. The poor farmer decided to return the stone back to its original place. We will have to wait for safer times before we can all visit this site of local myth.

Michael

