

Christmas Ramblings

Trafford Ramblers Newsletter

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<http://www.ramblers-trafford.co.uk/>

Guest Editor 3 AMIGOS



The
Supreme
Leader



always
wears
fresh
clean
pressed
shorts



We are walking again

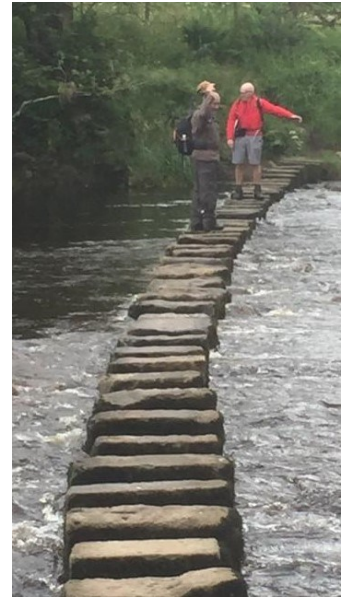
For all information about the reintroduction of Saturday Strolls and Thursday Walks as well as occasional extra walks please regularly visit our website



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The 3 Amigos

Christmas Pot Luck Quiz

1. How many reindeer is Santa believed to have?
2. In which year was the Queen's speech televised for the first time?
3. Which Puritan leader made Christmas illegal in 1647?
4. In the "Twelve Days of Christmas" song what was given on the ninth day?
5. St Francis of Assisi is said to have created the first Nativity performance in Italy in which year?
6. Who sent the first ever Christmas card?
7. Where does the word Yule come from?
8. The Christmas tree displayed in Trafalgar square is a gift from which country?
9. Postmen in Victorian England were popularly called what?
10. What normally happens on Boxing day and why is it given that name?
11. Which of Santa's reindeer was said to have a bright red nose?
12. In the Polar Express movie, what is "The First Gift of Christmas"?
13. Which author wrote the popular "A Christmas Carol" that helped to revive the "spirit" of Christmas and seasonal merriment?
14. What date is St Stephen's Day?
15. In the "Twelve days of Christmas" song how many Maids were Milking?
16. The Anglo-Saxons referred to the Christmas feast as what?
17. In the Ukraine what does it mean if you find a spider web in the house on Christmas morning?
18. At Christmas it is tradition to kiss under a sprig of which plant?
19. In the song "Santa is coming to Town" how many times does Santa check his list?
20. At the end of the 1988 Die Hard film what was the famous Christmas song played during the credits?

Answers on a post card to Dave Guest, or you can wait for the next **RAMBLINGS**

Ramblings

Variation on a Theme

For the last two years I've been trying to come up with a different way to encase mincemeat at Christmas, in other words a variation on a mince pie. "Why bother" I hear you ask and you may have a point. A mince pie is a thing of wonder, spiced dried fruit with a touch of alcohol within sweet short crust pastry, tradition on a plate. It's probably the first of the traditional foods we eat each festive season. All the coffee shops have them on the menu throughout December.

Last year I came up with the Bakewell mince pie, a traditional mince pie with a topping of frangipane and some of you may have tried them on the penultimate walk before Christmas last year. This year it's the "Eccles Mince Pie" What could be more appealing than a local delicacy modified for Christmas. The modification is minimal, the usual filling is similar to mincemeat but when you taste them I'm sure you'll be able to tell the difference. I make no claims for improvement, merely a change for the season. Incidentally I know of two Trafford ramblers who positively drool at the mere mention of Eccles cake. Strangely neither is a Lancastrian, one a Yorkshireman and the other a Devonian.

Equipment

Rolling pin

Pastry brush

10cm Pastry Cutter

Baking sheet lined with greaseproof/parchment paper

Ingredients

Puff pastry (Homemade / Shop bought)

A jar of mincemeat (Homemade / Shop bought)

Demerara sugar

One egg

Plain flour for dusting

Method

Heat oven to 160 degrees fan/180 degrees

1. Roll out pastry to the thickness of a £1 coin, 3mm approx. (shop bought ready rolled pastry is usually 375g per sheet. Not sure how thick it is but if too thick roll out to correct thickness.)
2. Use cutter to cut out pastry discs. Re-roll off-cuts to cut more discs. (I get about 9 discs from 375g of homemade pastry.)
3. Use your fingers to flatten and stretch the edge of each disc. This is so that when the edges are folded over the filling the bottom of the cake is no thicker than the top.
4. Stack the discs with a layer of greaseproof between each disc and chill for no less than 30 mins.
5. Sprinkle the demerara sugar onto a dinner plate.
6. Put a dollop of mincemeat (about a dessertspoonful) into the centre of each disc. Wet your fingers and pull the edges over the filling and seal. Turn the cake over and press with your hand to flatten.
7. Beat the egg with a little salt (this emulsifies the egg and makes it easier to brush on).
8. Brush the top of each Eccles cake with the egg wash, dip into the demerara sugar and put onto the baking sheet.
9. Nick the top of each Eccles cake three times with a sharp knife/scissors.
10. Bake for approx. 25 mins but keep an eye on them. When they are golden brown they are done.
11. Leave to cool for 10 mins, then eat with whipped cream, ice cream or for an indulgent treat brandy butter. May also be enjoyed cold.

Try them on the Mince Pie walk on December 17th.

Merry Christmas
Uno de los tres amigos.

Ramblings

The story of the Three Amigos.



For those who don't know, the Three Amigos (or 3 stooges or 3 monkeys or 3 musketeers – depending on who you talk to) are David Guest, Rob Harrison and Neil Hughes. An odd mix of a big ex policeman, a small older retired accountant and a hansom young retired IT consultant.

David moved to Trafford from the southern warmer climate and became one of our car share buddies with myself, Terry, Joe and sometimes Shantha whenever she happened to spend a few weeks in the UK. We have slowly educated David in the ways of the North and he now says 'HIYA' to passing walkers rather than 'Good Morning' or a posh 'OH HELLO'. David has even become a Lancashire Cricket Club season ticket holder so we can truly say he is an assimilated Northerner now.

When Rob retired he joined our merry gang and we quickly identified a kindred spirit.

What happened next was that I was out on a walk lead by Nigel to the Horseshoe Pass in Wales which was quite a long and strenuous walk. The next day I had an appointment with the heart surgeon and made the mistake of taking my wife with me. My wife asked if I was still allowed to go hiking, hill walking etc. to which I was told it was on the banned list. If I had gone on my own I wouldn't have asked and just carried on walking. You live and learn, or maybe not.

After a few miserable weeks or feeling like a caged lion, David rang to see if I was able to do a low level, shorter walks. So our weekly excursions on the flat started on a Monday or Tuesday each week leaving David free to do some proper walks with the group on Thursday. We did have some mishaps during this time. I remember a walk in the Bowden valley when our stroll for 7/8 miles turned in to 12 miles when we got lost, or should I say missed the path we should have taken. Another occasion we went to Formby to do a recci for a walk David was to lead and Rob came too. Another 8 miler which turned into 12. That's why we now refer to David's walks as 8 miles plus VAT, cause there is always something added one way or another.

Fast forward to 1st November and I had a triple heart bypass and had in my mind that maybe by February 2020 I would be able to start back with the group. So I did shorter walks on my own and increased my pace and stamina over a period of time. David and Rob came out with me and helped keep an eye on me. I was just getting to feel a lot better and regaining my fitness and Covid hit.

Everyone was unsure what we could and couldn't do and everyone was concerned, scared and worried about the dreaded Virus. David was advised to isolate and Rob's wife had health issues which meant he didn't want to chance bringing home any infection. I continued to walk on my own locally but having got a little frustrated I called Rob to see if he fancied a walk out one day. The first time we walked the river Mersey from Urmston to the Water Park and back. It was like a human highway. People, bikes, pushchairs, where did all these people come from, get them back to work. Week days are for retired people to shop and enjoy the outdoors and as I have told my mother, "Pensioners should be barred from shops at weekends as they have all week to shop."

Following a few weeks of isolation, I think David was going stir crazy and he decided to walk with us and that was the start of our weekly outings which quickly became twice weekly outings. Let's face it there was not much else to do.

Since April, the three of us have walked twice each week apart from hospital appointments, (I had to have another op to remove the wires from my sternum), funerals, doctors and of course the odd injury which curtailed our outings. We made a conscious decision to stick to just the three of us as we had developed a way of walking while maintaining a distance from each other and even when the group walks resumed I think we only did 2. One with Phill and one with Terry. It was good to be back with the group but I guess you could say we were still being cautious and wanted to keep safe.

The walks have not been without mishaps and my wife always says we shouldn't be let out without supervision. Besides the usual twisted ankles, insect bites, stinging nettles and brambles some other significant accidents have occurred. Rob fell off the top of a stone stile, injured his hand but had a soft landing in a load of cow poop. Rob had a couple of encounters with horses. One nearly gave him a swift kick and another seemed determined he was not going to make it across the field. It walked in front of Rob and if he went left to get past it then so did the horse, he went right and the horse copied him. It was funny to watch them zigzagging across the field.

Ramblings

David has stumbled on numerous occasions but normally manages to maintain some sort of decorum. Apart from a recent slip on a small wooden bridge when he managed to fall and bang his elbow and arm. Two week later and his arm was still purple.

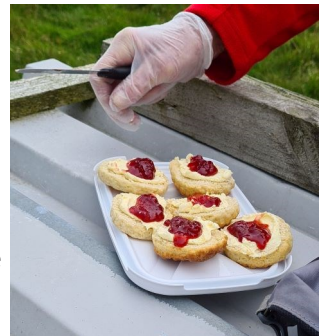
On another occasion we had to go up hill and diagonally across a field containing a couple of alpacas or llamas (sorry I don't know which they were) *{we were attacked by Rheas, (birds) rather than LLamas, (mammals) David}*. David was in front and as usual we were spread out in a line. It showed a little interest in David and he had to shoo it off. So it decided that Rob and I must be easier prey and it charged at us. Head down in an attack stance. We had to protect ourselves by waving our arms and hats at them to make it retreat. The other problem was that as we were going uphill we didn't have the strength or energy to run for it, so were forced to stand and protect ourselves. I can tell you when we got out of the field our hearts were really racing.

I fell over a root and cracked my ribs but the best one was in the Trough of Bowland. Phill had been in the area the previous week and warned us that one of the stepping stones across the Hodder was missing but we went and had a look anyway. When we looked at it Rob pipped up "Shall we give it a go". That was all the encouragement we needed. Boots off, trousers rolled up and off I went along the stones until I reached the first missing one. My attempt to put one foot down in the water failed, I over balanced, twisted my knee and ended up to above my waist in water. When I got to the other side I had to strip off and fortunately I had a spare pair of trousers and jumper in my bag. Luckily no photographic evidence exists.

The three of us have all had a turn at finding routes, leading the walk although I have to admit I am more of a follower than a leader. David is the master guide and Rob has become quite proficient at reading the maps even if he tells you otherwise.

We have walked in Lancashire, Cheshire, Yorkshire, Greater Manchester and Staffordshire. On some occasions we have been back to the same place but done different routes. We did 4 different walks around the Peel Tower and I think 3 different walks in Hartington. On the odd occasion we have even repeated walks which we enjoyed doing. Walks have mainly been between 7 and 10 miles and in varied terrain. So we have amassed a huge bank of walks and have used many of the internet tools at our disposal. Site we have used besides the Ramblers have been go4awalk.com, Visorando among others. It's true to say we have discovered or unearthed some great routes. We don't rush, we take our time to look around and admire the views and enjoy the sights and sounds and smells of the countryside. We have seen horses, cows, stags, deer, fish, kestrels, buzzards and all sorts of other wild life.

My wife always asked me what we talk about and I'm not sure I can share some of that with you or with her. But we put the world to rights and nothing is off limits even if we don't always agree. A favourite topic is cooking as both David and Rob are expert chefs and do most of the cooking at home. Of course we have the occasional treats when David or Rob have baked and even I have been known to bring cakes along even if I can't claim that I have done them as my Grand Daughter who lives with me likes to bake. We also discuss chores around the house and as well as cooking David does a whole host of other tasks in the home hence his other nick name as Saint David. My wife wants to know what she did to deserve being married to me who is useless around the house.



I hope I have not bored you or given away too many of my friends secrets. After all I don't want to be tripped from behind on our next outing.

If anyone wants some walks emailing to them, drop me an email to neil@hughesitsupport.co.uk and I will forward them to you. I have a subscription to go4awalk.com and paid £14.99 for access to download 100 walks, so again if anyone wants to take a look let me know and I will let you have access. Lets face it I don't think I will be needing 100 walks any time soon.

Cheers Neil Hughes

