



RINGWOOD NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Vales Moor Walk

Date: 2nd January 2020
Weather: Overcast, 11 degrees
Walk Leaders: Pat and Derrick Holder
Attendees: 14

Our first walk of the New Year started from Smugglers Road car park situated on a minor road which runs between Burley Street and Crow. A damp and overcast day after a very wet winter made it very wet underfoot so not a lot was seen, there is no list just a short resume. Upon leaving the car park we proceeded uphill along the Smugglers Way, all to be seen was Gorse. Peeling off the track towards Verely Hill disturbing a very noisy Meadow Pipit along the way. We turned right towards Broad Bottom where we could hear a Stonechat calling, alongside our path a piece of rotten tree which was covered in Turkey Tail fungi. We returned walking across Vales Moor back to the car park accompanied by a Carrion Crow flying alongside us.

The New Forest has a well documented history of Smugglers (or free traders), predominant during the 18th and 19th Centuries. The forest became a haven for the smugglers to distribute their goods from the numerous coastal coves in Dorset and Hampshire. Some of their main contraband was tea, brandy and silk goods. They created a network of numerous tracks covering hubs of transfer around places such as Burley, Christchurch, Lymington and Bourne Heath (now Bournemouth). Brothers Peter and John Warne along with their sister Lovey lived in a house at Crow Hill Top called Knaves Ash. They are believed to have run the Christchurch smuggling fraternity in the first quarter of the 1800's. Lovey Warne used to wear a cloak on her walks in the Vereley Hill area. If she spotted revenue men, she would turn it inside out to reveal a scarlet red colour which warned the smugglers to avoid the area. She would also go on board the ships in the docks, undress and then wind yard after yard of expensive silk round her before redressing and making her way back to Burley. They would then either hide the contraband somewhere safe such as a pub or a church or pass it on to their clients. One of the most famous of these sunken tracks was known as Smugglers Road. It begun near the inlet village of Chewton, passed through Burley, continued onto the turnpike road at Picket Post and ended at Ridley Wood.



Vales Moor, Smugglers Way by Lyn Traves