

Ramblers Gems



A Spring Vale Rambling Class Publication

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Murder on the Moor

There has been much written about the murder of "Old Aggie" at Stepback in 1860, but what is the correct version. There is little evidence remaining of the old farmhouse that once stood on the level ground besides the path up onto the moors at Stepback. This is where Agnes and her husband John lived for many years. The original story of murder originated in the 1930s in an article published in the Darwen News, which ceased publication many years ago. These facts were incorrect, but the story has been repeated ever since and included in displays at the Information Centre.



Old Aggies on the side of Darwen Moors

Old Aggies was a favourite spot for picnic parties and it was said that she provided ale and refreshments for men working at the mines on the moors. Agnes Singleton married late in life and was listed as a handloom weaver. An abridged version of a case held at South Lancashire Assizes, Liverpool, says that on November 5, 1860 the elderly inhabitants of the cottage near Stepback awoke to a noise. John Singleton lit a candle to investigate.

Three men entered the room, one with a gun, one with a hammer. They threatened to kill them unless they delivered their money. They would allow his wife Agnes Singleton five minutes to pray. She showed them a box containing a five pound note. The old man gave them a purse. The three men, previously known to be poor, were later seen to have money in considerable sums. A £5 note was found on one of the prisoners. The day before the robbery they were served beer at the Greenway Arms in Darwen (now the Cock) and had no money to pay, the next morning they had plenty of money.

The men, John Doran, 20, Thomas Atkinson, 22, John Warden, 23, were tracked down and charged with committing assaults on John and Agnes Singleton. Doran and Atkinson were sentenced to 20 years penal servitude, Warden was sentenced to 10 years. The Census held the following year shows that the cottage at Stepback was still occupied by John Singleton and Agnes Singleton. The cottage was shown as unoccupied in the 1871 census. A full copy of the court reports and copies of census records are held in a bound volume in Darwen Reference Library.

The originally researched was carried out by Jon Aspin Darwen for an article in the LET.

Michael C

History all Around

A report on the walk from Hurst Green on Saturday 12th February 2005. The walk is now the Tolkien Trail

On a windy Saturday morning our group of eleven and a dog set off at the start of the walk from the sleepy little village of Hurst Green. The village straddles the quiet B road that runs between Longridge and Clitheroe and in the past has won an award for the best kept small village.

Our route today first takes us up to and through the grounds of Stonyhurst College, one of the finest Roman Catholic educational establishments in the world. We stand and marvel at the magnificent facade of the college, with St Peter's Church to the left of the Hall. The Church was inspired by Kings College Chapel in Cambridge and was completed in 1835. The Jesuits, fleeing from Liege, France, settled at Stonyhurst Hall in 1794, when it was given to them by Mr Thomas Weld, heir of the Shireburns. The museum treasures include the embroidered cap of Sir Thomas Moore, Catherine of Aragon's religious robes and a cloak of Henry II's. Much older than these, though is the 7th century copy of St John's Gospel. This is the oldest example of an English leather-bound book, surviving from the Anglo-Saxon period.

The way now takes us around the back of the college to emerge onto tracks and woodland paths leading to the side of Hodder Place. The might of Pendle Hill, in solemn, but remote mood, looks on from afar. We follow the curve of the Hodder, to emerge on the road by Lower Hodder Bridge. This bridge was built in the 1820's and gives us a most interesting view of the much older pack-horse bridge. This bridge is reputed to have carried Cromwell and his armies on their way to battle at Preston. It is very narrow and must have taken them an age to cross or perhaps this is just a myth.

The Ribble Way is now taken up and we go on past Winkley Hall, through Winkley Hall Farm to join up with the River Hodder again. We walk along the banks of the Hodder for the last time, for now the Hodder joins the even faster flowing, Ribble. The Ribble takes a long loop, almost doubling back on itself and we notice just across the water Hacking Hall, a fine Tudor dwelling, built by Judge Walmesley in 1607. The River Calder now adds its volume to the mass of water already in the Ribble and the mighty torrent flows on. The river is not

in flood yet for debris in the trees, overhanging the river, reveals that the Ribble has been much higher.

It is at Hacking that a new footbridge is promised by the County Council. This is to replace the old ferry that once crossed the Ribble at this point linking the paths on the southern side to those on the north and along the Hodder. The bridge will be most welcomed, if and when, it appears. The ferryman used to live in the cottage by the Ribble and the hillocks behind are said to be the burial place of Wada, a Saxon Chieftain, killed at the battle of Billington in 798. There have been ways across the Ribble at this point for centuries, with a prehistoric ford at Brock Hall down river and a Roman Road ford up on the Calder.

The path follows the river down stream, passing the measuring station which is used to check and record the flow of water. Wire ropes span the river to allow measuring equipment to accurately record the flow at varying points in the river. This is Jumbles Rock and rough waters are ensured because of the rocky outcrops in the river. This would be a challenging stretch of water for the group of canoeists we had just seen float down river and we had all waved to. We head on past the aqueduct pipes spanning the river in a gentle arch, musing at whether this is how the new bridge might look, once completed.

The path in the final section of the walk is extremely muddy. We slip and slide our way along riverside and wood, to emerge onto the farm track leading down to Trough House and the footbridge at Dinkley. Our way here turns to the right climbing up the hill towards Hurst Green, passing the property called Lambing Clough.

Our journey complete, we have walked a distance of 7 miles, have got soaked to the skin, but have enjoyed ourselves tremendously and feel better for the experience.



Michael C

A History of Glasson Dock

We often start Spring Vale Rambling walks from the car park at Glasson Dock on a branch off the Lancaster Canal.

In 1780 the Lancaster Port Commission bought land from the Dalton Family of Thurnham Hall in order to build a pier for the unloading of larger vessels which could not reach Lancaster Quays.

The only buildings in this area at the time were the small farming/fishing communities of Old Glasson and Brows -Saltcotes, so a handful of cottages were built (some of which are now the Dalton Arms), and the Pier Hotel (which later became the Caribou, and now converted into flats). Little real building was undertaken until the Glasson arm of the canal opened in 1826. At this time the first 'Canal Terrace' was constructed (now Tithebarn Hill), closely followed by Lock Keeper's Cottage and Canal Cottage.



In 1834 the first shipyard was opened, shortly followed by the building of the Customs House, and in 1836 the Watch House was built at a cost of 19/3/Od (£19.15p). Further house building took place for the shipyard workers, and by 1841 the Dry Dock was in use. Although shipbuilding did take place at Glasson, it was never profitable, and it was ship repairing that kept the shipyards in operation until 1968, the dry dock being filled in a year later. The silencer factory in place now however, is currently one of the largest manufacturing sector employers in the Lancaster area.



The railway arrived in Glasson in 1883, and the passenger station was in front of what is now Station House. The railway lines continued to the East Quay for goods trains servicing the port. As with many small branch lines the railway was eventually deemed unprofitable, and the last scheduled passenger service ran in 1930. After this the line was dismantled and later converted to a linear park and cycleway.



Cargoes still handled at Glasson include coal for shipment to the Isle of Man and Western Islands of Scotland, whilst cargoes inwards include fertilizer, sulphur and animal foodstuffs. The sheds around the dock still house such cargoes.

Eleanor

A Bridge too far

I seem to have issues with some of my walks and it is all to do with water. It was June 2017 when I had another encounter with a water course and a blocked route. My walk colleague had found an 8-mile walk in a walking magazine and we set off. The idea was to walk from Sedbergh via Brigflatts and do the Quaker Trail up to Fox's pulpit and back to Sedbergh. We visited the Friends Meeting House in Brigflatts and looked forward to the rest of our walk.

First, always check the mileage of walks in walking magazines because I have since seen the walk advertised as 10 and 11 miles! Second, some of the walk was on almost 2 miles of a main road and I was not happy thinking about leading a large group of people to Lincoln's Inn Bridge.

We got as far as Hole House, where the path, now part of the Dales Way, runs through the backyard of the house. To our dismay we could not cross the River Lune at Fishermen's Bridge because the original crossing had been washed away in, yes you've guessed it, Storm Desmond in December 2016!

Back to Hole House and the gentleman told us to walk the river to the next bridge. The Quaker Trail could not be undertaken without a long detour along the Dales Way to the Crook of Lune Bridge and the B6257. What a hike that was over rocky terrain in hot sun and when we got to the bridge we were told by a householder that we had a long walk via Fox's pulpit back to Sedbergh from that bridge and that it would be shorter and quicker to take the footpaths and lanes back to Sedbergh which we did. We walked 12.8 miles in heat and at the end of it we did not have a C walk for the 2nd of July.



Friends Meeting House, Quaker Village, Brigflatts

I had to go all the way back to Sedbergh on a separate day and recce a completely different route. This was to be a 8.5 miles walk with a steep climb up Winder to the trig point and cairn. We descended to the River Lune and the Waterside Viaduct then it was on to Ingmire Hall and the Quaker Village of Brigflatts before returning into Sedbergh.

Back in 2018 there was an official opening of the new footbridge. A replacement crossing built at the cost of £110,000 pounds – restoring access to the rights of way network. It is the only river crossing in a 5 mile stretch of the Lune. Apparently, it has been beautifully done by real skilled craftsmen so I think it is now time to do this walk again and have a look at it.



The new Fisherman's Bridge on the River Lune at Sedbergh



The Trig Point on Winder Sedbergh

Barbara S

Footsteps through time

Springvale walks often go past historic halls and ancient sites. I grew up in the Whitehall area of Darwen, it was my playground. A favourite wander was from Bury Fold and up Duckshaw Rd en route to Darwen Tower and the moors. As you walk up this farm track, with fields on both sides, a farmhouse comes into view across the fields on the right, Green Lowe. If you look closely you will notice two mounds in the field in front of the house. These are generally regarded as ancient burial mounds. They just don't look natural and the name "lowe" usually suggests a burial site. Surprisingly, they have never been excavated. Interestingly, some of the Neolithic sites on the Anglezarke Moors have also never been properly examined.

Another area frequently walked by Spring Vale Rambling Class is to the west of Blackburn around Hoghton Tower. Everyone, I'm sure, is familiar with the story about King James I knighting the joint of beef, during a visit to Hoghton Tower. What isn't so well known is that Sir Richard Hoghton - the then tenant of the hall, had spent so much money entertaining the King and his entourage, that he went into debt and had to spend some time in the debtors prison.



Many pubs have sadly closed in the last few years. One such pub was the Punch Bowl on the B6243, half a mile West of Hurst Green. During the early 18th century it became the headquarters of Ned King and his gang - a notorious highwayman who preyed on passing travellers. He was eventually caught and hanged in nearby Gallows Lane. Up until the 1940s his ghost was said to haunt the area around the Punch Bowl.

Tony C

Happy Days

