

Ramblers Gems



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The River Hodder

The River Hodder rises on White Hill, one of the hills behind Slaidburn and flows for approximately 23 miles to the River Ribble. Where the rivers meet is an impressive sight, particularly when both are in spate. The Hodder drains much of the Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and all but the last mile of its course is through this scenic area. The upper reaches of the river feed the large Stocks Reservoir, which provides much of Lancashire's water supply.



The Higher Hodder River

After leaving the reservoir, the Hodder continues in a general southward direction. It collects many tributaries from the valleys of Bowland and, lower down, parts of the Ribble Valley. Most notable among the feeders of the Hodder are Croasdale Brook, Easington Brook, the River Dunsop, Langden Brook and the River Loud. Much of the northern land in the Hodder Valley is owned by the Crown as Duke of Lancaster, whilst further down, farming land on the Stonyhurst Estate is owned by the Jesuits of Stonyhurst College. The river runs close to the College and passes adjacent to the former preparatory school, Hodder Place.

The old packhorse bridge crosses the River Hodder near to Hurst Green and was built around 1561 by Sir Richard Shireburn who lived at Stonyhurst. The bridge is named after Oliver Cromwell who in the August of 1648 marched the New Model Army over it to fight the Royalists at the Battle of Preston. Cromwell's victory at this important battle led to the end of the Second English War and the execution of Charles I.

The River Hodder eventually joins the River Ribble near to Great Mitton, this is close to where the River Calder also joins.



The Cromwell Bridge

Michael C

A few of my favourite stiles

A **stile** is a structure or opening that provides people passage over or through a boundary via steps, ladders, or narrow gaps. Stiles are often built in rural areas along footpaths, fences, walls, or hedges that enclose animals, allowing people to move.

‘Recent changes in UK government policy towards farming have encouraged upland landowners to make access more available to the public, and this has seen an increase in the number of stiles and an improvement in their overall condition.’ If you are a rambler like me then you will almost certainly have other opinions on the subject of the quantity and quality of stiles and how they can vary between local authority areas and from county-to-county.

Thankfully many legacy stiles remain in a variety of forms. As well as having a variety of forms, stiles also sometimes include a 'dog latch' or 'dog gate' to the side of them, which can be lifted to enable a dog to get through.

A ramble wouldn't be an adventure without a crooked stile or two to negotiate so here are a few of my favourite stiles that I encountered on recent walks...



Otter Gear stile



Slimming World stile

There is a *British Standard BS5709:2018 Gaps Gates & Stiles* and I should know as I have built a few in my time but I can't help but question if this standard is being adhered to when stiles are badly repaired, not replaced or allowed to disintegrate. The Standard covers gaps, pedestrian gates, bridle gates, kissing gates, dog gates, horse stiles of two kinds, kent carriage gaps, and step over and flat top pedestrian stiles. It must be a never-ending and intriguing role being a footpaths officer for a local authority, a ramblers group or a landowner.

Stiles are increasingly being replaced by gates or kissing gates or, where the field is arable, the stiles are being removed along with hedgerows and other boundaries.



Pulpit stile



Jenga Skill & suspense stile



Tree pruning stile



A stile to nowhere

Barbara S

The Coming of the Cuckoo

The coming of the cuckoo always generates a joyous kind of excitement in that the courting call signals that winter is over at last, and summer is not far ahead.

The old saying is that the cuckoo comes in April, sings in May and leaves us then in June for warmer climes. The cuckoo song is a tranquil, calm sound that many of us love but rarely hear these days. They were heard in the Wycoler area last year by two SVRC walkers.

In Tibet's ancient shamanistic tradition, the cuckoo was a magical bird, the king of birds. As the cuckoo's first call is the harbinger of spring, so the six verses of the 'Cuckoo's Song of Total Presence' introduce the total presence of the nature of mind.



Slavic peoples always treated cuckoo as a special bird. Slavs associated the cuckoo with a female, a widow, and a messenger of Zhiva – the Goddess of Life. Before Christianity became an official religion, cuckoo represented mourning. In many old songs, cuckoo arrives to mourn the souls of those who passed. Some Slavic peoples even had a custom of portraying a few images of the cuckoo on the grave crosses: the amount of the “cuckoos” would be equal to the amount of the living remaining in the family and grieving the loss of their loved one.

In Celtic mythology, cuckoos are commonly associated with death, rebirth, fertility, and springtime. Many superstitions associated cuckoos with good or bad luck depending on the circumstances of the encounter. They were often thought to signal oncoming storms as well.

Indian mythology holds the cuckoo bird in special significance. These birds are associated with the onset of the monsoon season, fertility, hope, and the onset of the new year.

In Japan, the cuckoo is associated with unrequited love, longing, and the onset of summer. In some traditions, the calling of cuckoos represents the desperate longing that the dead feel to return to their living loved ones.

In Greek mythology, cuckoos were associated with Hera, the goddess of marriage. In one story, Zeus woos Hera by appearing to her in the form of a cuckoo bird. Pliny the Elder wrote of cuckoos having a magical ability to protect from pestilence with their calls. Where a cuckoo call is heard the earth can be dug out and used to prevent fleas and pests. In Aristophanes' "The Birds," which is the source of the “cloud cuckoo land” idiom, cuckoos and other birds are described as being older than the gods themselves.

The cuckoo is called a lazy bird because it does not make a nest of its own. It lays its eggs in the nest of the crow, where the eggs look like its own.

The cuckoo is largely misunderstood. Although there are plenty of cuckoo birds that are harmful brood parasites, many more cuckoos are shy and harmless. In some limited cases cuckoo birds that lay eggs in the nests of other species may actually help the host species' survival. This is because cuckoo birds excrete a foul substance when threatened which deters predation.

When a cuckoo is seen for the first time of the year, you should put a stone on your head and run as fast as you can until the stone falls off. You should then mark the spot where the stone fell and if you return to it tomorrow there should be money underneath it!

They may signal everything from good luck to death, but their elusive nature, haunting calls, and widespread range have allowed cuckoos to make a prominent mark on human culture.



Jean G

When daisies pied and violets blue

A SONG BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE
(from *Love's Labors Lost*)

When daisies pied and violets blue
And lady-smocks all silver-white
And cuckoo-buds of yellow hue
Do paint the meadows with delight,
The cuckoo then, on every tree,
Mocks married men; for thus sings he:
"Cuckoo;

Cuckoo, cuckoo!" O, word of fear,
Unpleasing to a married ear!

When shepherds pipe on oaten straws,
And merry larks are ploughmen's clocks,
When turtles tread, and rooks, and daws,
And maidens bleach their summer smocks,
The cuckoo then, on every tree,
Mocks married men; for thus sings he,
"Cuckoo;

Cuckoo, cuckoo!" O, word of fear,
Unpleasing to a married ear!

When icicles hang by the wall,
And Dick the shepherd blows his nail,
And Tom bears logs into the hall,
And milk comes frozen home in pail,
When blood is nipp'd, and ways be foul,
Then nightly sings the staring-owl,
"Tu-who;

Tu-whit, tu-who!"—a merry note,
While greasy Joan doth keel the pot.

When all aloud the wind doth blow,
And coughing drowns the parson's saw,
And birds sit brooding in the snow,
And Marian's nose looks red and raw,
When roasted crabs hiss in the bowl,
Then nightly sings the staring owl,
"Tu-who;

Tu-whit, tu-who!"—a merry note,
While greasy Joan doth keel the pot.

Pesto Cenorr

Did you know? The common name 'Lady's-smock' arises from the cupped shape of the flowers. However, 'smock' was once a slang term for a woman and the name may have alluded to certain springtime activities in the meadow

The Haunted Skull

The Roman Road between Manchester and Ribchester is locally known as Watling Street and tucked away in a lovely part of village of Affetside there is a pub, named The Pack Horse Inn. On the surface it looks like your ordinary country pub serving good food and even better beer. However, one thing stands the Pack Horse Inn out from most others. That is the human skull located in plain sight just behind the bar. The story behind this skull and rumoured curse is slightly unusual.

The Pack Horse Inn is an ancient pub and supposedly was originally built in 1442, so as you can image it has a long story. The skull which made the pub famous, is nestled just behind the bar. It belonged to George Whewell who famously was the executioner of James Stanley, the 7th Earl of Derby. James was beheaded by George on the 15th of October 1651 on Churchgate Bolton. He was charged with disregarding the Act of Parliament that made it illegal to have any dealings with Charles Stuart who was the pretender to Charles II. It was recorded that his last words were "Blessed be God's name for ever and ever. Let the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen"

It isn't really known how George died or why his skull is in the pub, but it is said to have been there since the late 1800's. One thing is known however the skull is cursed. For if you take the skull from its resting place, you will be visited by the ghost of a headsman wielding an executioner's axe. After being warned by the spirit, you had better return it as soon as possible. If not, you will suffer the same fate as James Stanley. You have been warned.



Eleanor

The Decline and Revival of Furness Abbey

In early 1536 Henry VIII felt threatened and wanted to bring the Church under state control so he passed an Act which would suppress the smaller monasteries. A protest broke out, the Pilgrimage of Grace, which implicated the Monks of Furness.

Eventually the last abbot, Roger Pyle, gave in. Rather than face trial for treason he offered to give up the Abbey together with all of its possessions to the King. So, Furness became the first monastery to be dissolved. The deed of surrender was signed by the abbot and 28 monks on the 9th April 1537.

On 23rd June 1537 the receiver arrived to survey Furness Abbey and to dispose of the lands attached to the Abbey. By 3rd July lead was being stripped from the roof, tracery from the windows was being broken and buildings were being dismantled even while the monks were still there. It must have been heartbreaking to see all of their hard work being taken away from them.

The high sheriff of Cumberland was given responsibility of the site and lands which saved the former abbot's house for his domestic and agricultural purposes. Over the next 8 to 10 years other individuals were leased the site but in 1549 a document from Lancashire Pleadings in the Duchy Court refers to the ruinous state of the Halle and other houses. By 1671 a Manor House had been built together with associated buildings and was referred to as a stately new house.



The Ruins at Furness Abbey

The site remained in the Preston family for several generations before being passed to the Lowthers but they preferred to live at Holker Hall. After finally passing to the Cavendishes it was occupied by a variety of tenants. By the second half of the 18th Century the building was in decline having been leased out for agricultural and other purposes. By 1775 an estate map shows that the manor had deteriorated into a small farmhouse.

But a plan was hatched to encourage visits for all tourists to include the ruins as an essential part of a trip to the Lake District. Even William Wordsworth helped out with the publicity on this one. This was further helped with the construction of the railway to Furness especially when the plans included the establishment of a station and hotel right next to the Abbey. The line opened in 1847, expanding to Ulverston and Lancaster within 10 years. The Cavendishes sold the Manor House to the railway company and it was renamed Furness Abbey Hotel.



The Manor House

Both Wordsworth and John Ruskin were renowned for giving negative statements about the coming of the railway to this peaceful spot in the Lake District. When Thomas Beck directed antiquarian excavations he suggested using gunpowder to blast the rubble into manageable sizes to enable removal.

Furness Abbey had appeared in specialist works on Cistercian architecture and it appeared in early photographic studies of Gothic architecture. Cleaning, restoration, devegetation were carried out.

From 1923 restoration has continually been on going together with general tidying up of the site. Only suffering bomb damage in 1941 it considered itself very lucky to escape major problems. The site has continued to be cared for by various government's departments but it's future is protected by English Heritage.

Glenda B.