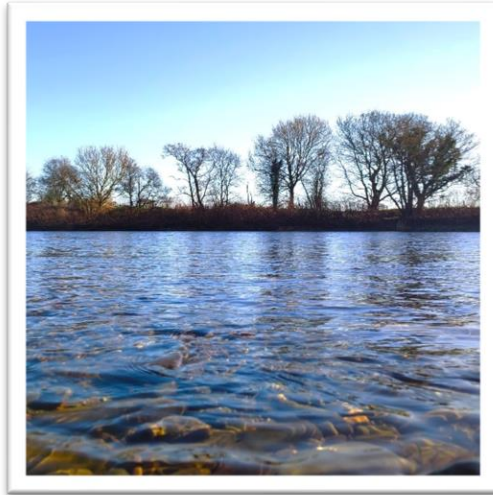


Lunesdale ramble from Kirkby Lonsdale

Introduction



Last week's walk took us to Wensleydale where we noted that everyone loves a riverside walk, and this week we test that theory with another riverside ramble – this time much closer to home.

We start from Kirkby Lonsdale, a place that Bentham Footpath Group have used as a starting point many times. Our route takes us west to Wood End, then along a quiet path down to Sellet Mill. We then stroll over to Sellet Hall and follow Hosticle Lane through Hag Wood until we get to Whittington. We spend some time at the lovely church there before heading down to the river Lune via Coneygarth Lane, and finally return via a riverside path directly to Kirkby.

We conclude that riverside walks are indeed lovely. This is a great walk, and other than a couple of stretches that can be wet and muddy after heavy rain, is easy going.

- **Total distance 10.9 km (6.8 miles)**
- **Total ascent 151 m**
- **Easy walk**

The Walk

We start in Kirkby Lonsdale, using the free parking close to Devil's Bridge. For those unfamiliar with the area, Kirkby is on the A65, and Devil's Bridge is at the junction between the A65 and the A683 Sedbergh road. There are free parking spaces on the Kirkby side of the river on Bridge Brow, or on the east side using the signed car parking spots. Take care if parking near the bridge on the east as there are restrictions on some days, and if your vehicle has the wrong number of wheels, you may incur a ticket. If you are using Satnav, try Bridge Brow, Kirkby Lonsdale, LA6 2DF as an address, or if your device accepts what-3-words tags, the exact location of the parking to the east of Devil's bridge is **reinstate.coverings.durations**, which corresponds to OS grid reference SD61627824.



The first landmark of the day is obviously Devil's Bridge, a fine three-arched stone structure dating from the 12th or 13th century, and now a scheduled ancient monument. The bridge is a popular tourist attraction and a haunt for motorcycle enthusiasts who congregate at weekends - hence the parking restrictions. Prior to being superseded by the more modern, but less attractive Stanley

Bridge just to the south, Devil's Bridge was once the only crossing over the Lune for miles and formed part of the busy west-bound route into the town.

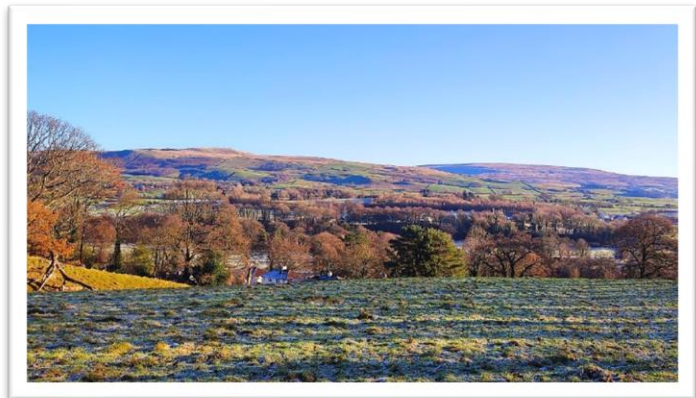


At the apex of the bridge, there's a deep impression in the stone – often referred to as the devil's handprint. Almost inevitably, a myth has been generated to explain the alleged handprint:

An old woman lived on the banks of the Lune with a few animals, and one night her cow strayed across the river and could not be tempted back. The devil appeared to her, offering to build a bridge in exchange for the soul of the first body to cross it. Satan then constructed the bridge with his own hands,

leaving his print in the stone. The next day the woman met the devil at the bridge and agreed to fulfil her part of the bargain. She took a bun from her bag and threw it across the bridge, whereupon her small dog raced across to retrieve it. The devil, in a fit of rage at being outwitted, howled in anger and vanished in a cloud of brimstone. It seems that it's not only the devil suffering from stupidity at this location – prominent signage advises us that a local bylaw bans persons from jumping from the bridge "without reasonable excuse".

On the Kirkby side of the bridge there is a picnic area, and our path goes through the centre of this and over to the A65, which we cross with care. We take the gate opposite and follow the path through the field heading up toward the back gardens of the houses to our right where we find a narrow path up to the road – the B6254 to Whittington. We cross that road and continue opposite climbing up the steep bank of the hillside at Wood End. The path is



generally clear, but if in doubt stay to the left of the field close to the trees, and don't forget to pause to look right across to Kirkby and back toward Casterton Fell as these are the best views.

We follow the edge of the woodland until we get to Wood End, where there is new housing under construction, and note a junction with another path coming over from the western end of Kirkby near the school. We go left here toward the white-washed cottages and take the lane alongside them on a path signed for Sellet Mill. The route here is initially easy – but as we progress further south it joins with a minor stream. During dry weather this is barely visible, but after heavy rain, this section of path requires some



care, or can even be impassible. The section where the path coincides with stream lasts for just 100m or so and after we have cleared this Sellet Mill comes into view – in the early 19th century this was a water powered corn mill but has since been converted to a private house. The current owners have retained the mill pond that was historically used to maintain consistent water flow to the water wheel and created an attractive garden around it.

Fifty metres after the mill pond, we take a sharp right to walk toward a gate at the end of a row of cottages, and from there down to a second gate where we cross a minor stream to head right along the field boundary – we are now heading toward Sellet Hall and need to look for the point where the path crosses through the hedgerow about 150 ahead.

As we stroll through this field you may notice the top of what appears to be a built structure slightly out of sight on the hill to the left. This is a hidden gem, just the trig point at the top of Sellet Bank at 117m.

Having crossed the hedgerow, we keep to the left of the next field and soon see a road ahead to the right of Sellet Hall – a rather attractive farmhouse probably dating to the 16th century with extensive 17th century additions and alterations. We cross a stile to get to the road and then immediately walk left passing the front of Sellet Hall on Hosticle Lane.



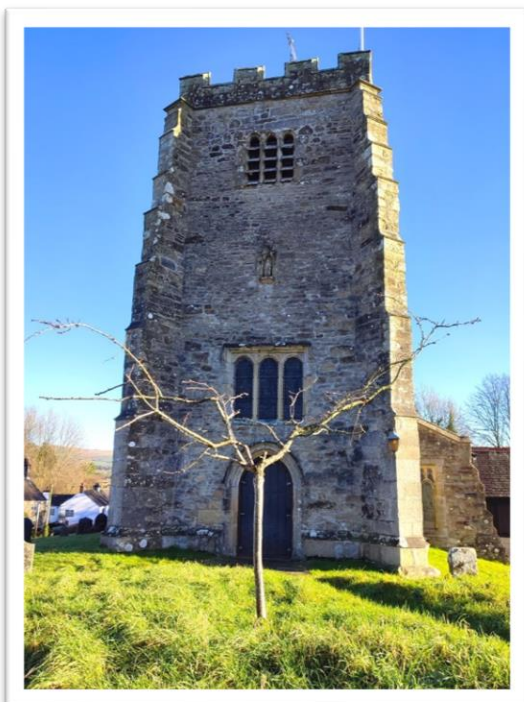
We pass a track on the right (overgrown and barely visible) that leads to a disused quarry, then pass along the edge of Hagg Wood, with the trees to our right. We note an attractive large house on our

left and then 600m later arrive at the village of Whittington - we are now in Lancashire.

Whittington is notable as one of a cluster of sites along the Lune valley, each with clear archaeological evidence of a Norman Motte and Bailey castle. There are similar remains at Burton in Lonsdale, Melling and Arkholme, making this area the most intense area of Norman castles outside the Welsh borders.

The Motte is within the grounds of St Michael the Archangel church, which we see just to our left, so we head into the church grounds where we find much else of interest:

It is thought that a church has been on this site since 1200, although none of those early structures remain. The oldest part of the present church is the tower, which dates from the early 16th century. The rest of the church was largely rebuilt in 1875 to





a gothic style by the Lancaster architects Paley and Austin. Rebuilding costs were met mainly by Colonel D. C. Greene of nearby Whittington Hall.

Within the church grounds there is a mound, and it is thought that prior to having been part of the Motte, this was a Norse Moothill – a meeting place where local people gathered to decide local issues. On this there is a sundial placed on a square base featuring five steps, which are thought to have been the base of a cross at an earlier time.

The inside of the church is also well worth a look – you will find excellent stained glass windows by Lawrence Lee, the creator of the spectacular windows at Coventry Cathedral, a fine reredos

(carved altarpiece) of the Last Supper, and a 17th century font. You will also notice a donations box – please give generously.

From the church we look down toward the river Lune and see a clear path between two fences at the far end of the modern section of the graveyard. This is our onward path, and it soon emerges onto the B6254 at the lodge house for Whittington Hall. Opposite this is a waymarked track, called Coneygarth Lane which leads down to the riverside.



This is another section of the walk which is simple to navigate, with easy walking in fine weather – when it has been wet however expect the lane to be somewhat challenging.



Once we arrive at the riverside we meet the Lune Valley Ramble path – we take this upstream heading left back toward Kirkby, but before we do so, we enjoy lunch at the riverside.

The remainder of the walk requires absolutely no navigational skill, we simply follow the riverside path all the way back to Kirkby Lonsdale. That does not mean of course that the walk is dull. There is much to see and hear on the way. The first 500m or so of the return path brings us to Burrow Mill Lane, an alternate path down from Whittington, which shortens the route somewhat for those short of either time or energy.

Opposite this is Nether Burrow – where when the river is at it's lowest it is apparently possible to wade over for a pint at the Highwayman.

This part of the river is a good place for bird spotting. As we strolled past, we saw herons, egrets, widgeon, and goosander. Widgeons are perhaps best identified by their distinctive whistle, which is not at all like the usual quack of a duck.

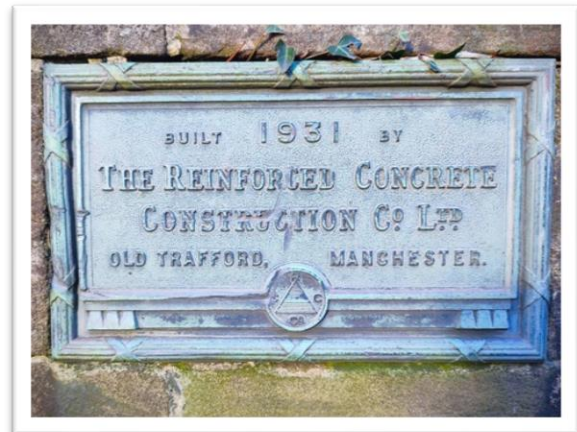
Just a few metres upstream from this, on the far side of the Lune, we see the confluence with the Leck Beck, and a quick glance at the OS map shows the location of a Roman fort just to the north of this. From river level where we are standing this is not particularly clear, but when viewed on the flythrough on our website, it stands out as a clear circular artifact. Archaeological evidence suggests that a timber fort was established here late in the first century (during the Flavian dynasty) but relatively little is known about it. Excavation of the clay-and-turf ramparts and defensive ditches also suggests a second period of occupation at a so far undetermined time. A substantial camp outside the fortified settlement known as a vicus seems to have developed along the roads to the north and west.



Further north we see a bridge across the Lune, and we might be tempted to think that we are arriving back at Kirkby. Not yet – this is a pipe bridge, part of the Haweswater Aqueduct a 72 mile water transfer system that brings water from Haweswater in the Lake District to Manchester via an interim local storage reservoir at Heaton Park. This hugely important part of our national infrastructure is one that we have come across on other Bentham Footpath Group Walks – such as our Tatham Fells walk.

We continue up the riverbank toward Kirkby, noting some diversions of the path to cope with

erosion of the banks, and soon have Stanley Bridge, which carries the A65 over the Lune, in our view. As we get closer, we see a path up to the main road, which we cross to end the walk, noting as we do the plaque on the parapet of the bridge stating that it was built in 1931 by the Reinforced Concrete Construction Company of Old Trafford. This bridge could not really be described as beautiful, but as it approaches it's centenary, it does at least seem to have lasted reasonably well.



- **Total distance 10.9 km (6.8 miles)**
- **Total ascent 151 m**
- **Easy walk**