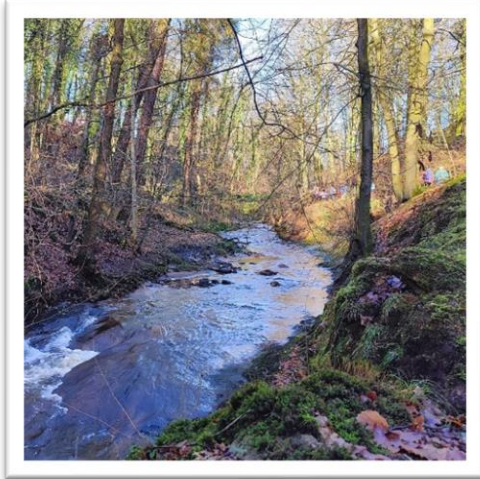


Longridge Fell from Hurst Green

Introduction



Just one week on from a walk where the weather worked against us, we have a little more luck: This walk, like last week's offers great views, but this time we got to enjoy them, along with interesting diversions on the way round. These include Cromwell's bridge (which we drive past just before the start of the walk), the Shireburn alms-houses, The Ribble Jubilee Trail, Greengore - a buttressed hunting lodge once used by Henry VII, the fell top forestry path at Longridge Fell, a lunch break with jaw dropping views over to Parlick and Fair Snape Fell, Bleak House, sculptures of horses, the original site of the alms-houses – yes they were moved, and the manicured grounds of the famous Stonyhurst College. And as a bonus we got a free organ

recital hearing the majesty of Widor's Toccata. It's only January, but this must be a candidate for best walk of the year.

- **Total distance 11.9 km (7.4 miles)**
- **Total Ascent 267 m**
- **Easy walk**

The walk

We start at Hurst Green using the car park at the Memorial Hall in the village centre – payment for this is via an honesty box at the entrance and the suggested donation is £2, which seems very reasonable. Public toilets are available 150m down the road from here, making Hurst Green a perfect starting point for a walk.

The village is easy to find – it's just off the B6243 which heads south-west out of Clitheroe following signs for Longridge. You will find that the B6243 crosses the River

Hodder just before Hurst

Green. The

road bridge is an unremarkable 19th Century structure, but of more interest just 100m downstream are the remains of Cromwell's bridge. This is an ancient packhorse bridge at a natural crossing point that in good weather could be forded quite easily. There are records of a bridge dating back to the 14th century, but this would have been a wooden structure, and proved



unreliable, and so was replaced in stone in 1562. The instigator of that project was Sir Richard Shireburne of Stonyhurst Hall. Together with local landowners Edmund Shireburne, John Holden and James Shuttleworth he drew up a contract for its construction on the 30th December 1561. The connection to Cromwell refers to an important meeting held at this site: Having intelligence that the Royalist forces were in Lancashire, Cromwell marched his 8000-strong army from Skipton to Gisburn and then on 16th August 1648, he gathered his New Model Army and local militias at Old Lower Hodder Bridge and there, in his own words, “held a council of war”.

Once over the Hodder you are less than a mile from Hurst Green and need to keep an eye open for Avenue Road on the right. If you are using Satnav to get there, try Avenue Road BB7 9QB as an address, or if your device works with What-3-Words tags, then **bloomers.nesting.blast** is in the centre of the car park, which corresponds to the OS grid reference SD68433820.



We start the walk by heading out of the car park and on to Avenue Road where we turn right to take the footpath along the front of the Shireburn Alms-houses.

The rather fine building we see today is rather curiously not the original Shireburn Alms-house. That was built in 1706 at Kemple End on Longridge Fell (we walk close to the original site later in the walk). Changing demographics meant that the

need for alms-houses became greater in Hurst Green so in 1946 they were moved stone by stone, with a first floor being added to the wings and the number of doorways opening off the courtyard reduced from ten to four. Because the original site sloped, the front of the courtyard and wings is raised on a masonry base, the courtyard being approached by a flight of 10 semi-circular stone steps. This was retained when the building was relocated even though it is no longer a functional requirement.

Not far beyond the alms-houses we approach the gates for Stonyhurst College. As we arrive there, we notice a track running across the front of the college grounds and we go left here into Mill Wood, following Dean Brook upstream. This is part of the popular Ribble Valley Jubilee Trail and so is well used.

As part of the Borough’s Jubilee celebrations, Ribble Valley Mayor for 2022-23 Councillor Stuart Hirst, a keen walker, inaugurated a new circular walking trail around the beautiful Ribble Valley and Forest of Bowland National Landscape. The whole route covers 65 miles and is well worth exploring – we have covered other parts of it on a number of Bentham Footpath Group walks including those at Bolton by Bowland, Dunsop Bridge, and Pendle Hill.



About 400m into the woodland we approach a stone bridge over the Brook, where we cross and continue Northwest along a slightly more substantial track for the next 500m, bringing us to an

interesting property bearing the name Greengore. It is thought that this is a former hunting lodge for the Stonyhurst/Shireburn estate.



The current house dates to the late 16th or early 17th century, although there are records of earlier buildings here.

It would seem that there were concerns about the structural integrity of the building at an early stage though, as impressively large buttresses have been added to prevent the walls bowing outward.

We know these are a later addition,

as they obscure the window lines – not a choice that would have been made if they were designed in from the start. The building was restored in the nineteenth century, and popular legend has it that King Henry VII resided here while hunting deer in Stonyhurst deer park – the woodland opposite the house is known as Deer House Wood.

We continue northwest, and about 200m beyond Greengore, the woodland thins out giving us good views across the valley to our right and down to Crowshaw Lodge, a man-made reservoir that once played a part in controlling the flow of water down Dean Brook to a number of mills in Hurst Green – these included Coltsford Mill, a flour mill, a bobbin mill and the old Mill House on Avenue Road, near to where we parked.

Paths come in from the right, but we stay with the clear route of the Ribble Valley Jubilee Trail, which curves round to the right as we approach Crowshaw House, and it's associated farm buildings. Just 150 later we arrive at a minor road where we head right walking on the road for just 50 m to find a gate on the left taking us up into woodland. This is a good place to pause for a break.



The woods here are plantations rather than ancient woodland so don't expect too much variety in terms of tree species – there are however a number of interesting fungi to be found where forest management has left dead wood to decay. The fact that the trees here are a crop rather than a natural feature is highlighted just 400m into this part of the walk when we arrive at an area where the trees have been cropped leaving a landscape of bleak devastation. There have been some minor diversions to the footpath here to allow the works to progress safely without preventing access for walkers, so don't

be too concerned if the obvious safe route on the ground differs from the OS map a little.

Ahead we see a farm (Green Thorn) and we head toward the left hand side of that – the path is a good 50m or so from the farm, and curves right to go around the back of the buildings and up through further dense woodland before arriving at a broad track along the top of Longridge Fell. The



gentle climb that we have been following almost since the start of the walk is now complete.

Once at the track, we turn right and head east along the top of the fell. The OS map shows this area as being densely forested – and it clearly was at one point, but the trees have since been harvested and replanted, meaning that in winter 2025, we have great views to the right over to Clitheroe and Whalley. The views to the left toward the Forest of Bowland are not yet visible as the track is too far below the top of the ridge.

We follow the track for about 1km, and just as it starts to veer right and head downhill, we meet a recently cleared area where we now have a view across the other side of the ridge into the Hodder Valley, and on a

clear day we see Fair Snape Fell and Easington Fell. This is a good place to take a lunch break as we sit and enjoy the panorama. It is very noticeable from here that the Northern slope of Longridge Fell is very steep, whilst the Southern side is rather gentle. This is because the fell is an example of a “cuesta”, originally Spanish for a slope, but in geographical terms, meaning a hill or ridge with a gentle slope on one side, and a steep slope on the other. The term is more specifically applied to a ridge where a harder sedimentary rock overlies a softer layer, the whole being tilted somewhat from the horizontal. This results in a long and gentle backslope called a dip slope that conforms with the dip of resistant strata, called caprock. Where erosion has exposed the frontslope of this, a steep slope or escarpment occurs.

Fully refreshed, we press on and note that the track is now heading downhill. As we progress it gets steeper and soon adopts a zig-zagging alpine pass style. We continue until we meet a minor road (in fact the same one we were on after Crowshaw House). We are now close to the original site of the Alms-houses at Kemple End – drawings of the single storey building are available within the V&A collection.

We head left down the road looking for an engraved stone telling us that we are at Bleak House. The road heads sharply to the





left here and we continue straight on down a track leading to a small group of cottages. As we follow the track onward, we pass a farm on our right where the owners' interests clearly centre on matters equestrian: As well as a number of stable blocks there is a rather attractive horse sculpture close to the track.

The track continues past the farm and eventually arrives at a gate where we access open fields. The going can be a bit muddy here, and immediately after the gate, we have a choice of routes. There is a path heading somewhat to the left which goes steeply downhill toward Stonyhurst College.

We opted to stay right and follow what appears to be an old green lane – it is believed that this was the route by which stones from quarries to our north were dragged down to Hurst Green. This path brings us down to a stile adjacent to a recently renovated cottage where we join a minor road and head left and downhill toward the college.

200m later we pass a junction where a minor road joins on the right, and then 50m later the road turns sharp left with the footpath into the grounds of Stonyhurst College continuing ahead. We take that path into the college grounds.



From here, the walk feels a little surreal: We are on a public footpath, yet the grounds feel rather exclusive – and perhaps the kind of place where we imagine we might not feel welcome. Any such doubts are soon dispelled though as we get a pleasant greeting from everyone we pass.

The site was not originally built as a school, rather it was a grand house, with associated estate and gardens owned and developed by the Shireburn family over several generations. The Shireburns were catholic, which created tension between them and the Monarchy eventually resulting in their imprisonment and the confiscation of their land.



When the Shireburn lineage died out, the estate passed to Thomas Weld, from Dorset, who was only 6 years of age, and therefore uninterested in the estate. It lay empty empty for 40 years, until as a mark of gratitude to the St Omer Jesuit School, who educated his sons in France, Thomas Weld gifted Stonyhurst and 30 acres of land to the school when they needed to escape from Revolutionary France.

Today, Stonyhurst College is the UK's leading Catholic boarding and day school for 3-18 year olds, boasting Arthur Conan Doyle as an alumnus: He attended at the same time as two Moriarty brothers and a boy called Sherlock. The sons of JRR Tolkien also attended, one studying to be a cleric (1940s) and the other taught classics (1960s). Tolkien stayed in the guest house at the school and supposedly wrote some of the Lord of the Rings trilogy here.



Our route continues past St Peter's church Stonyhurst, which serves not just the college but also acts as the parish church for Hurst Green. As we passed, preparations were being made for a concert, and we were treated to an impromptu organ concert featuring the finale from Vierne's Symphony number 1, and Widor's Toccata.

From here our route back is simple: As we approach the college's observatory on our left, we head right to follow a path round the edge of Fox Fall Wood. We stay to the right of the open fields as we enter them and soon arrive at a lane behind cottage back in Hurst Green. We follow this down to the junction with Avenue Road

where we go left passing the alms-houses again to arrive back at the cars.

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