

PARK&STRIDE

with Mark Richards
on BBC Radio Cumbria

30 Long Meg from Addingham Church

My move to Cumbria nearly eight years ago from lowland West Oxfordshire was the fulfilment of a long held resolve not merely to wander the high fells, but because I held a passion and admiration for the greater countryside of Cumbria. From an early age the first books I really had contact with were the nature stories of Romany and Raq. Hence it comes as no surprise that a walk in Romany Country holds a rich treasury of magic moments in



distance : 6.4km/4½ miles

time : 3 hours

grade : A jolly good country walk

MAP (Ordnance Survey) OL5 North-eastern area

PARK The capacious car park at the entrance to St Michael's church at the lost village of Addingham, located a quarter of a mile south of the village of Glassonby - eight miles north-east of Penrith.

Long Meg, Little Salkeld Mill and Lacy Caves

Anyone who wanders alive to their outdoor world will identify with spiritual emotions; they will find both ancestral and immediate resonance of being 'at one' with their native land in this very special excursion. A walk to renew one's faith in nature.

any season. Rev G. Bramwell Evens, alias Romany of the BBC, regularly stayed at Old Parks Farm during the 1920s and 1930s. In 2001 Terry Waite unveiled a plaque to his memory in the Methodist Church, provided by the Romany Society. The plaque later moved to the site of his ashes at Old Parks, includes the phrase 'He loved birds and trees and flowers and the wind on the heath', their evidence is all apparent on this walk. "Out with Romany" was the first regular and hugely popular naturalist series on BBC radio, where he was able to share his bond with the natural world with children. The Methodist Central Hall in Carlisle was built during his time in ministry and contains another tribute to the work of a man who touched millions.

The Walk

Enter St Michael's churchyard, the notice advising horse-riders to stay on the paved path an unusual request at such a moment. However, the path through Addingham churchyard is a bridleway, I know of no other instance where riders may formally approach a church door without reproach! Search in vain for the village or even a vestige hamlet of Addingham the medieval settlement, located down by the Eden, is a 'lost village'. The church stands at the centre of a very large graveyard abundant with handsome tombstones to the good people of greater Glassonby. The gorgeous-toned sandstone of the church simply glows in the sun. In spring the scene is further enhanced with native narcissus, the daffs simply flood the well-tended lawns.

From the church porch wander on with the paved path south to slip through the metal gate and into the horse pasture, currently two ponies graze the electric fenced paddock – not without concern is there a notice directed at dog owners! Advance to the Maughanby farm-road, crossing by the facing gates. The first steps in the next field are currently muddied by recent manure spreading operations. Keep the wall close right along an unploughed margin, bear right at conifers via the hand-gate entering a confined path, from where the westward views of a Lakeland fell skyline stir the heart, from High Pike to Loadpot Hill with so much in between. At the end of the conifer break a hand-gate opens to another fenced field margin with what at first glance appears to be young sprouts, but when looked at more earnestly proves to be nine-inch high conifers... it then struck me this is the farm I bought my Christmas tree from last year! A hand-gate leads into a pasture field keeping the wall close right advance through successive gates, now with woodland left. Spot the bizarre ash tree close right as if grafted to a mighty bulbous burr at its base! Dairy Friesians frequent this and the next field, which is entered via a cattle-muddied hand-gate in the fence corner.

Arriving upon the massive Long Meg and her Daughters stone circle is an emotional moment. Grazed by loafing cows for whom the stones are convenient rubbing posts and traversed by the open access road to Long Meg Farm, the scene is at once agrarian and monumental. On any sunny day a car or two park up beneath the trees and people slowly stroll around the great ring, it is as if we find in these sites a deep ancestral bond with our native land and the roots of the people



were are. The 'Daughters' are erratic boulders hauled from the surrounding countryside, a tiny example can be seen beside the burr ash just passed. Long Meg is the main attraction, hewn from the local red sandstone, possibly from the Eden bank near Lacy Caves. On its eastern side a metre up from the ground find three concentric ringed rock art reliefs, quite a rarity in Cumbria, profuse in Northumbria. The symbolism is of unknown meaning, but the regularity of the form is clear. It is unusual to come to this spot and not find flower petals or coloured ribbons at the base of the stone, affirmation of its spiritual attraction. Indeed, I must record that when at this spot in July with a group of friends, I tried my hand with divining rods and witnessed them pull irresistibly together, as it did for everyone who similarly experimented... more than interesting! Long Meg, standing some four metres high, probably means quite simply 'the tall megalith', a definite outlier, it may pre-date the stone circle. Fifty-one stones set in an oval of 120m diameter form the errant erratic Daughters. There is a further Bronze Age circle, known as Little Meg, situated some 700m to the north-east, though there is no public access. Judging by the serifs a certain 'W J Scott' added his name in graffiti on Long Meg in Victorian times, perhaps to ward off Colonel Lacy who infamously tried to blow the stones up to dispel their superstitions. Alternatively, he was



Little Salkeld Watermill

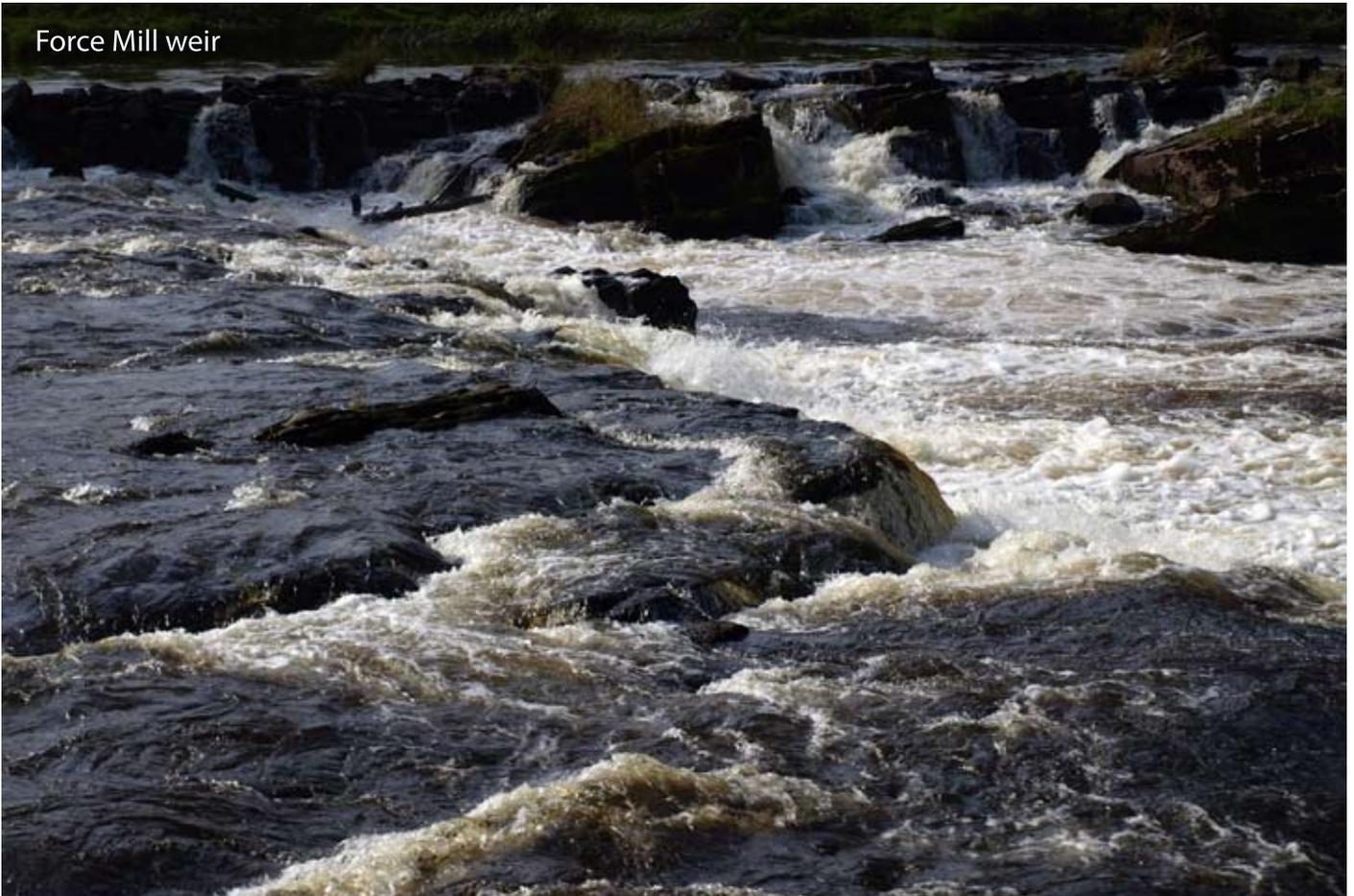
claiming a link with the wizard Michael Scot who turned a local coven of witches into stone!

Follow the road left via the cattle grid/stile, as the road swings left go straight ahead down the green lane. The views from the lane are extensive from the peaked little hills above Dufton backed onto the Pennine chain to the Howgills and on round to Lakeland. Whoever installed the tiny wooden seat certainly knows an enchanting spot to make regular forays - a latter-day Romany? The lane bears left and meets the road. Turn right to enter Little Salkeld, the 'lesser willow well', corresponding with the magna village across the River Eden, Great Salkeld. The first cottage on the right on your descent, was once a Quaker Meeting House, the graveyard survives. At the next bend in the road the route continues forward by the Green. But one should not haste on without first visiting Little Salkeld Mill. Follow the main road left down to the bridge finding the rose-madder painted mill-buildings. Since 1975 Nick and Anna Jones have run this artisan watermill, milling stone-ground flour for people who know that nothing

remotely beats the real thing! In harmony with the spirit and letter of the Slow Food Movement, you can refresh yourself in the café and glance in at the active dusty mill's interior and see the waterwheel round the back of the building, harnessing the beck. An age-old sight, the greenest energy imaginable. One must ask why are there not more micro-turbines drawing the power of gravity from the tumbling becks of Cumbria? Such discreet structures being sympathetic to the Cumbrian landscape, by contrast to the threatened invasion of wind turbines. Nick is at the vanguard of the Real Bread Campaign and seeks to work in conjunction with CAMRA and others to encourage pubs to serve up local ale, bread and cheese, pickles and other local food commodities.

Step back up the hill to now turn left along the lane by the Green passing Town End Farm with its Stardingham herd of pedigree Friesians. Where the road forks, keep right, with signs repelling vehicular access. The roadway leads parallel to the Carlisle/Settle Railway. Coming alongside a railway bridge keep forward with the kerbed road signed

Force Mill weir



'Daleraven Bridge'. Periodically along the walk you may notice wooden posts with attractive motifs placed by East Cumbria Countryside Project as this is one of their Discover Eden circular walks. This one depicts a flight of river-bank frequenting sand martins. Coming alongside the old signal box find a imaginative brick collage set into the ground representing the flowing river and the four village schools who helped in its creation: High Hesketh, Armathwaite, Langwathby and Culgaith. The presence of a redundant signal box may seem strange, but it and a predecessor, once served sidings associated with the Long Meg Gypsum (anhydrite) mine. In 1896 the Long Meg Plaster Co begun surface and drift mine workings in Cave Wood and after changing hands several times finally closed in January 1976 having produced 5 million tonnes; at peak production in 1925 the mine had a workforce of 29.

After passing two old shored-up stone mine buildings the footpath is directed left down to a barrier with a red disc, there switching acutely down left in a fenced passage coming beside a humming electricity sub-station, switch tight right again (without touching any switches mind you!). The level path crossing the course of the old branch railway line to the gypsum works.

The fenced path leads through woodland high above the riverbank with the odd remnant of the mine track and decaying retaining walls, even a flight of steps. But your ears will be ringing with thunderous sound as the Eden gets agitated in splashing over the natural weir of whinstone opposite Force Mill. One may cautiously climb down the bedrock slab - there are moss-covered rock steps lower down - to get an intimate and exciting close-up of the raging waters. The popular path next weaves on to get a first glimpse of Lacy Caves. One may climb above them or cautiously pay them a visit through a rock-cut. They are named after Lieutenant-Colonel Samuel Lacy of Salkeld Hall in Little Salkeld, who commissioned their carving in the 18th century. The reason for their creation is unknown, however they were used by Lacy for entertaining guests and the area was originally planted with ornamental gardens. There are five 'rooms' from the innermost climb out of the 'window' and bear right to re-gain the path (definitely do not go left!).

The continuing path steps onto a long plank walkway. On my visit in early October 2008 this was one element of the countywide Art Invasion called FRED (www.fredsblog.co.uk). Here artist Christine Hurford has laid hundreds of little white



Lacy Caves

human figures created from natural materials lying vulnerable between the slats they represented the inner being of us all.

The path exists the woodland after crossing three stiles and a boardwalk climbs the eroding riverbank pasture advancing to a stile into the mature conifer woodland, promptly descending to the road at Daleraven Bridge.

St Michael's Church, Addingham

Follow the road uphill right, shortly after the highway subsidence notice find a track bearing off right, this quickly turns left into a narrow away-from-it-all green lane. Pass on from a waymark post adorned with 'jays', the lane has its muddy moments but is a predominantly grass trod visited by the occasional tractor and quad-bike. Before the woodland intervenes on the right enjoy a fine westward view across the Eden valley and north too, towards Lazonby and the distant Barrock Fell distinguished by its mast. Beyond the woodland arrive at a lane junction with a 'badger' motif waymark post, at this point there is a final grand view west to the Helvellyn range and Blencathra. Turn left signed 'Long Meg via St Michaels Church'. See in the hedge base right a beckstone wall, an usual feature, suggesting an old boundary bank. The lane, again muddy in parts, leads to Shangri la, alias your waiting car.

After-walk refreshment

Tea-room at Little Salkeld Mill and two pubs in Kirkoswald the Fetherston Arms and Crown Inn.

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