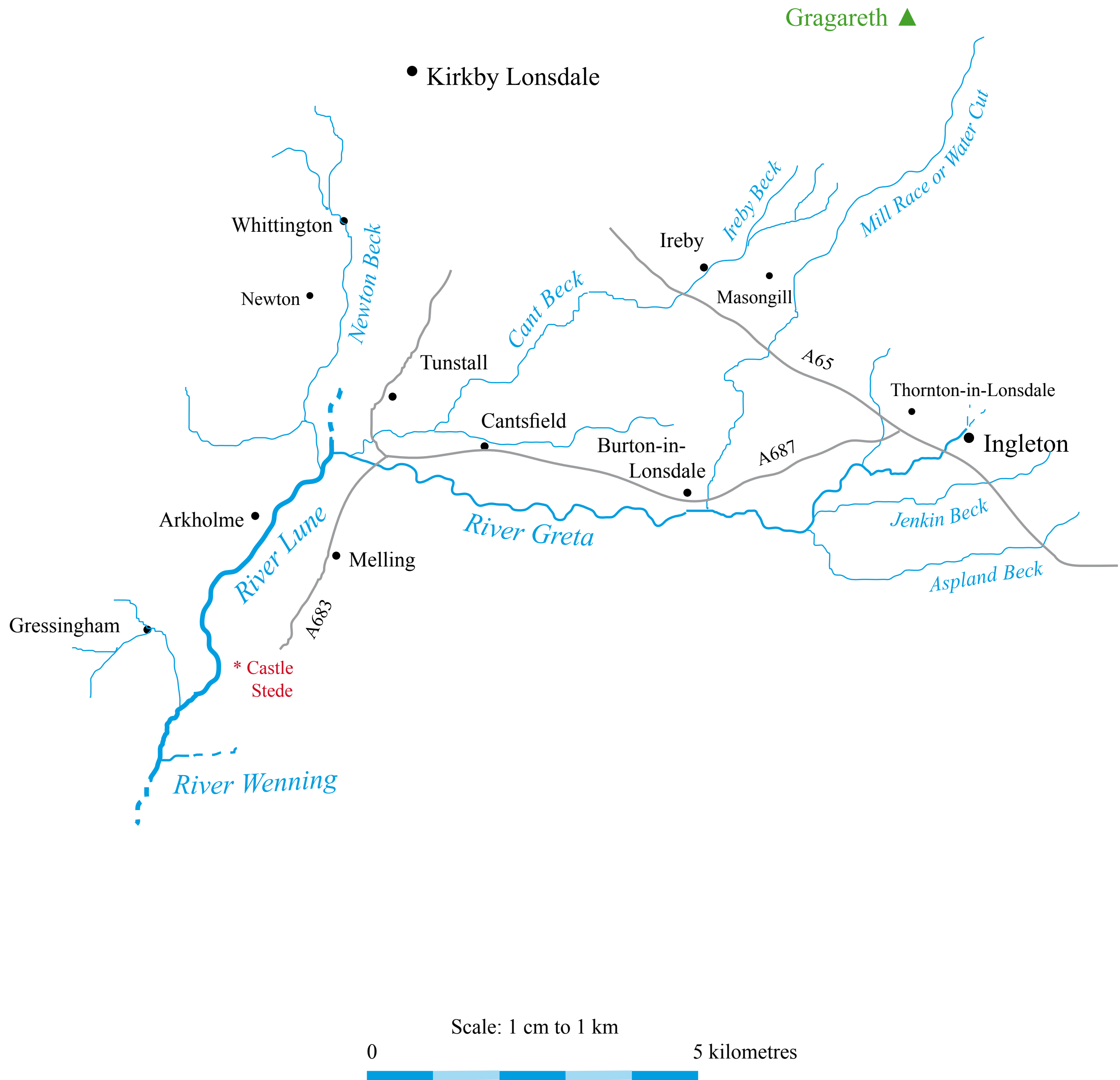
CHAPTER 9: Gretadale and a little more Lunesdale



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The Greta from Kingsdale Beck

Chapel Beck and Kingsdale Beck (or the Rivers Twiss and Doe, or vice versa) merge to form the Greta in the middle of Ingleton. Ingleton is always thought of as part of the Yorkshire Dales although it is in fact carefully excluded from the National Park, whose boundary detours around the northern outskirts. Perhaps the boundary makers agreed with the afore-mentioned Thos Johnson who, writing of the church in 1872, said that it "partakes of the character of the houses, being a miserable, slap-dashed building, without one redeeming feature."

No writer would dare to be so offensive today but even so it cannot be denied that Ingleton has more of an industrial nature than places we've visited earlier. Apart from the tourist industry, which dominates today, there is still quarrying nearby, although on a lesser scale than previously, and an industrial estate, close to the site of the old Ingleton Colliery. In 2004 a monument was erected near the A65 to help ensure that Ingleton's coal mining history is not forgotten. Small-scale coal mining, as in Dentdale and Barbondale, existed here since the 17th century, although the seams were of poor quality and thin, as indicated by their being called the 'four feet' and 'six feet' seams. Numerous pits are shown on the OS map, all marked as disused, which they became once the railways made local coal mining uneconomic. In 1913, however, a 'ten feet' seam was found deeper underground (quite why anyone went to the trouble of looking is unclear). The Ingleton Colliery operated until 1936, employing up to 900 people. There is no sign of the colliery now but it is not inconceivable that, with new technologies and changing energy policies, coal mining will return to the region.

The Greta passes under the Ingleton Viaduct (for the Lowgill-Clapham line) of eleven arches nearly 30m high. It is here that the 'failure of railway politics' mentioned on page 52 was most manifest. Approval for such a viaduct was granted in 1846 but dithering and disagreements between the companies involved delayed its building until 1861. Then the animosity between the Midland Railway and the London and North Western Railway led them to build two railway stations, the former's east of the viaduct and the latter's to the west. Through passengers were required to disembark and transport themselves and their luggage between the two stations. To maximise inconvenience the companies ensured that the timetables did not mesh. (And we complain about the modern rail system.)

Tourists from the industrial cities of the north heading for the Ingleton Waterfalls disembarked at the station to the east (where the information centre now is) and were led by guides to the start of the walk, averting eyes from the slap-dashed church, at least until 1886 when St Mary's was rebuilt, retaining the old tower. Inside the church there's an interesting 12th century font with carvings of gospel scenes. Ingleton is ancient, appearing as Inglestune in the Domesday Book, but, as Thos Johnson warns us, there are few old buildings of interest. Around the viaduct and the entrance to the waterfall walk, the main streets are lined with cafés and shops and in summer the pavements are jostling with the booted backpacked brigade.

The regions to the east and west of Ingleton drain to the Greta, from below Tow Scar by becks flowing through

Two pages before: Barn near Burton-in-Lonsdale.
Left: Ingleton Viaduct, where Kingsdale Beck joins Chapel Beck to become the Greta.

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The Greta (above) near Barnoldswick and (below) at Scaleber Woods

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Thornton-in-Lonsdale and from Ingleborough Common, south of Ingleborough, by Jenkin Beck and Aspland Beck. Thornton-in-Lonsdale is the place furthest from the Lune to acknowledge in its name an association with it. A website for its Marton Arms says that "together with historic St Oswald's Church, they form the charming hamlet of Thornton-in-Lonsdale." There is a little more to Thornton-in-Lonsdale than the pub and church, but not much. The church is surprisingly large for such a location and has a distinctive pyramid atop its tower. It was rebuilt in 1933 after being burned down in a blizzard, which sounds an event worth seeing.

Above Thornton-in-Lonsdale, on the road to the radio station, there is an unusually smart barn. If you peer through its windows, you will see its even more unusual contents - a red sandstone arch. The explanation? What else could it be but another Andy Goldsworthy construction? This arch was built and dismantled at many of the Goldsworthy Sheepfolds and ended up here.

Jenkin Beck forms the waterfall of Easegill Force in a secluded gorge, falling behind a natural arch. The beck dawdles across flat land to join the Greta 2km south of Ingleton and it is followed shortly after by Aspland Beck, which similarly runs uneventfully west from Cold Cotes. Here, the bed of the Greta is adorned with multi-coloured stones, reflecting the varied geology upstream, and the banks are heavily eroded, revealing interesting strata.

As the Greta approaches Burton-in-Lonsdale it passes Waterside Pottery, which it isn't but which reminds us that potteries thrived here from the early 18th century until after the Second World War. At one time there were fifteen potteries. The only evidence today is the pockmarked appearance of the fields, from which the shale was dug. Burton-in-Lonsdale was called 'Black Burton', in reference to the earthenware produced, or to the coal and shale used, or to the smoke from the kilns. Or perhaps to distinguish our Burton from the other Burton, Burton-in-Kendal, just 12km west in limestone country, although I can find no record of the latter being called 'White Burton'.

On the outskirts of Burton-in-Lonsdale, the Greta is joined by a millrace that runs from the old corn mill at Bogg Bridge. On the 1850 OS map this bridge is called Mill Race Bridge and the watercourse, for the 10km from its origins on the slopes below Gragareth to the Greta, is the "Mill Race or Water Cut". This indicates the considerable efforts that were made to control the flow of water in order to power mills. In this case there were several mills on the route of the millrace. Today the watercourse looks entirely natural below Masongill Fell Lane. Perhaps it was only the section to harness Gragareth's water that was man-made.

The beck, if we may call it that, runs past Masongill Hall, on the east of the village of Masongill. This is a quiet cul-de-sac, with most residences being conversions of traditional long-houses. Masongill is responsible for another of Loyne's tenuous links with celebrity: in 1883 the mother of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (who was then 27) moved here. Literary sleuths, who earnestly seek the inspiration for the creator of Sherlock Holmes, know that he regularly visited his mother and was sufficiently part of the region to be married in 1885 at St Oswald's Church in Thornton-in-Lonsdale, where a certificate in the porch names the bride as Louisa Hawkins. Some of them are convinced that Masongill House is Baskerville Hall, minus the hound. Others are intrigued that a Randall Sherlock, brother of the Rev. Sherlock, vicar of Ingleton and Bentham, was killed by lightning at Ingleton

Masongill House

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Ingleborough from Westhouse

station in 1874. I don't know of any contemporary, local comments on this 'coincidence' after Sherlock Holmes made his appearance in *A Study in Scarlet* in 1887.

From Byber Mill the Water Cut seems not to follow its old line but supplements Threaber Beck, which joins Moor Gill from Westhouse near Low Threaber. Westhouse is a distributed hamlet, with Higher, Lower and Far Westhouse satellites. Its lodge, recently renovated, has been given a new datestone of 1676. The Wesleyan Chapel bears three dates, 1810, 1890 and 1912.

In 2002 over ten thousand native trees were planted in fields north of Far Westhouse to create Edith's Wood, managed by the Woodland Trust. It is open to the public, with benches from which to survey the growing trees, with Ingleborough beyond. As the wood is a memorial, we should remember to whom: Edith Bradshaw of Ingleton, a teacher at Casterton School.

The Greta reaches the three-arched Burton Bridge, with the sizable, ancient village of Burton-in-Lonsdale on its northern slopes. It appeared as Borctune in the Domesday Book and is the site of another motte and bailey castle. In 1174, the de Mowbrays were ordered to demolish the castle after an unsuccessful rebellion against the king. A later stone castle stood until about 1350, since when the site has been abandoned. The motte, at 10m high, is a prominent landmark, and remains of the bailey and defensive ditches can still be seen, although they are on private land.

Also prominent is the nearby steeple – a rarity in Loyne – of the All Saints Church, completed in 1870. The steeple is surfaced with wooden slats. There is also a Methodist church, built in 1871. Like many Loyne communities, Burton-in-Lonsdale joined in the general questioning of the established church that began in the 17th and 18th centuries and, unlike nearby Bentham, it came to side more with the Methodists than with the Quakers. Maybe John Wesley's visit in 1764 played a part in this. So the churches are not particularly old and neither are the houses. Most of those of any age have been renovated, so that the neat Low Street, off the A687, presents a parade of Smithy House, The Old Ropery, and so on.

Motorists driving west through Burton-in-Lonsdale will see a blue sign saying "Richard Thornton's Church of England Primary School" and may wonder who he is or was. He died in 1865, having amassed a huge fortune of over £3m from his shipping business, and left £10,000

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for a school for poor children in Burton-in-Lonsdale. He also left £1m to his nephew Thomas Thornton, who duly had the All Saints Church built. Behind the School is the Old Vicarage, which has a plaque in its porch that cannot be read without trespassing (I assume that it is to the poet **Laurence Binyon**).

Below Burton-in-Lonsdale, the south bank of the Greta is wooded, with two of the woods, Memorial Plantation and Greta Wood, having recently been acquired by the Woodland Trust. The former is typical of 19th century small plantations on land that cannot be farmed, with pine, beech and sycamore. Greta Wood is an older ash and oak woodland, designated an Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland. A riverside walk follows the Greta west for 1km – and then stops. Perhaps it is more for fishermen, who have given names to the various stations along Blair's Beat: Long Pool, Tommy's Run, The Dubs, and Black Hole.

The Greta runs west through secluded wooded gullies, crossing the county border and the Roman road. At Wrayton, the Greta passes under Greeta Bridge (as it calls itself), which has been washed away a few times but is now in more danger from the traffic on a difficult junction of the A683 and A687. Just before the Greta reaches the Lune, Cant Beck joins it from the north.

Laurence Binyon is a poet from whom, if not of whom, everybody will have heard. He wrote the words intoned at Remembrance Day events:

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old;
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them.

The words are part of *For the Fallen*, which he wrote in September 1914.

However, Burton-in-Lonsdale's claim to Laurence Binyon is a little weak. He was born in Lancaster in 1869, moving a year later to Burton-in-Lonsdale, where his father had been appointed the first vicar of All Saints Church. But in 1874 the family left for Chelmsford. Later, working at the British Museum, he became an authority on oriental art.

We might imagine that the brief time in Burton-in-Lonsdale made little impression upon him but for his own recollections of his first memories, which were of views of Ingleborough from the vicarage windows. Ingleborough inspired his poem *Inheritance*, which began "To a bare blue hill" and ended "Beautiful, dark and solitary, the first of England that spoke to me."

Cant Beck

Cant Beck is a surprisingly modest beck considering that it drains the broad parishes of Ireby, Cantsfield and Tunstall between Leck Beck and the Greta. It loses the momentum gained in flowing off Ireby Fell, as Ireby Beck, in a sluggish meander across gently undulating pastures to Tunstall.

Ireby Beck begins life uncertainly on the southern slopes below Gragareth, hovering around the county border and seeming to disappear into various potholes. The most impressive on the surface is Marble Steps Pot, which is enclosed within the only cluster of trees on Ireby Fell. It drops 130m. Along the line of the beck, 400m south, is Low Douk Cave and across the county border is Ireby Fell Cavern, a large depression with at least two holes into which water disappears and one hole, a pipe cemented into place (is planning permission needed for these mutilations?), into which potholers disappear - and in some numbers, it would seem, as a group of 25 of them needed rescuing after becoming trapped in the cavern by heavy rain in October 2008.

I have been carefully vague in the preceding paragraph because I read that, contrary to superficial appearance on the map, the water falling into these holes does not join Ireby Beck at all. The water in Marble Steps resurges at Keld Head in Kingsdale; that of Ireby Fell Cavern at Leck Beck Head (probably). Of course, flows may have differed in the past and may differ in the future. I leave this all to experts – as far as fell walkers are concerned, the potholes mentioned can be conveniently viewed together, above the head of Ireby Beck.

Once Ireby Beck is incontrovertibly established it heads past some unnatural-looking mounds on the fell (old diggings or homesteads?), by Over Hall, a tower house dated 1687 and recently smartened up, with a cairn-like structure in the drive, towards the village of Ireby. As a rule of thumb, any village with a beck flowing through its centre is at ease with itself. It soothes and adds a timeless quality. In Ireby, the old-style red telephone box, the only public amenity, enhances this feeling. The houses, some of the 17th century, have been tastefully renovated and given countrified names – all very nice but perhaps without the character to detain a visitor.

The fields west of Ireby Hall Farm form pleasant and peaceful farming country, with fine views of Ingleborough and Leck Fell. The Roman road that we

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have been following cuts across here, but you would not notice it on the ground without being told. Cowdber Farm is so isolated that it feels it needs to put a "you are nearly there" sign on the track to it. But the quietness has its benefits: in the plantation near Churchfield House is the largest heronry in Loyne. Southeast of Cowdber is Collingholme, which promotes the good name of the region through its Lune Valley Hampers business, supplying luxury goods from locally produced food. Most farms in the region have been converted, partially or wholly, into homes for holidaymakers. Laithbutts has gone further: it provides a home for holidaymakers' homes. If you wish to put your caravan into storage, there are large barns for it at Laithbutts.

To the south, Cantsfield is a small community on the A687. The rather fine Cantsfield House, dating back to the 16th century or earlier, has an oddly appealing asymmetric frontage that was built by the Tatham family in the early 18th century.

A visitor's impression of a place can be unfair. I noticed a sign saying "This bridleway is over private land and is for the sole purpose of making a journey to Tunstall and Tunstall Church. It is not a dog loo. Please keep out unless you intend to complete the full journey." The map says that this is a *public* bridleway. It runs through land for cows, horses and sheep and at Abbotson's Farm I had just plodded through their contribution (much more substantial than a dog's) to the countryside aroma. And why must I complete the full journey and not turn back?

As it happens, I had no wish to return to Cantsfield. I pressed on to Tunstall's St John the Baptist Church, on the site of a chapel recorded in the Domesday Book. It escaped the 19th century renovations that 'improved' most Loyne churches and as a result is mainly of the 15th century, with some parts thought to be pre-Norman. A Roman votive stone from the Over Burrow fort was built into an eastern window during a 1907 restoration.

St John the Baptist Church, Tunstall

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Despite all its merits the church is best known for the fact that some girls used to come here in 1824. The Brontë sisters ate their packed lunches here and it became the Brocklebridge Church of Charlotte's *Jane Eyre*.

Tunstall itself is 1km to the west, past the Old School House of 1753. The old Post Office (which it no longer is) bears a date "circa 1640", which is refreshingly honest and a warning to treat other dates (of which there are several in Tunstall) with some suspicion. Especially, perhaps, Marmaduke House, with a plaque "Sir Marmaduke Tunstall 1506-57", which I take to be the date of Sir Marmaduke, not the house. As this indicates, we are nearing the historic Tunstall family home, Thurland Castle, by which Cant Beck flows. Thurland Castle is open to the public only in the sense that if you have half a million or so to spare you can buy a flat and live in it – which is a shame for Loyne is short of castles with pedigree. In Saxton's map of 1579, often regarded as the first map of England, Thurland Castle is one of only four places in Loyne to be shown, the others being Lancaster, Kirkby Lonsdale and Hornby Castle.

Sir Thomas Tunstall, knighted at Agincourt, was granted a royal licence to fortify the site in 1402. The most famous of the Tunstalls were Cuthbert, who became Bishop of Durham from 1530 to 1559, and Sir Brian, who was slain at the Battle of Flodden Field in 1513 – the 'stainless knight' described in Scott's *Marmion*: "Tunstall lies dead upon the field, His life-blood stains the spotless shield".

The Tunstalls sold the castle in 1605 to the Girlingtons and they were the owners when it was razed to the ground during the Civil War. It was restored in the old style in 1809 and in the 1860s was owned by Major North North. No, that is not a misprint: he was born North Burton and assumed the surname of North when he succeeded to the estate of Richard Toulmin North, his great-uncle.

The castle was rebuilt again in the 1880s after a fire. It has, no doubt, been tastefully renovated for the tenants of the twelve flats created from the castle and adjacent stables. The castle can now only be glimpsed from afar through trees. It consists of a circuit of walls and towers, enclosed in a moat, with a drawbridge into a courtyard but with no keep.

The estate agents try to give the castle some prestige by asserting that "in 1809 the architect James Wyatt, who was working on Windsor Castle at the time, was commissioned to restore the castle." James Wyatt (1746-1813) was the principal architect of the day and was notorious for taking on more commissions than he could manage. His nephew Jeffry Wyatt (1766-1840), later Wyattville, was probably more involved with Thurland Castle and it was he who later (1824 to 1836) carried out a major renovation of Windsor Castle. Thurland Castle does not feature highly in either architect's portfolio.

A short distance after Cant Beck has joined, the Greta reaches the Lune, which it enters in a straightened westerly channel, as old maps show the Greta entering the Lune in a long curve to the south of its present course. Then, unnoticed (almost), Newton Beck sidles into the Lune from the west.

The Greta joins the Lune

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Newton Beck

Like most becks on the west bank of the Lune, Newton Beck begins in desultory fashion among the low, rolling hills and never really gets going. It runs alongside the Lune for 5km from High Biggins, just south of Kirkby Lonsdale. At High Biggins there are, apart from the Old Hall, three halls of strikingly different architecture: Biggins Hall Farm, a black-and-white, seemingly half-timbered house with a red-tiled roof; Lonsdale Hall, a white Georgian mansion; Sellet Hall, a more vernacular stone building.

In 2006 the farm was sold in six lots (a subsequent proposal to use some buildings for storage was rejected); Lonsdale Hall houses a management consultancy; Sellet Hall is the home of a forestry management company. Loyne has no stately mansions like, say, Chatsworth House, but it has many halls for the landed gentry of the Middle Ages and later. The story of these halls, and the attempts, of mixed success, to find them a role in the 21st century, would make a fascinating contribution to the social history of the region.

Sellet Hall Beck and Pinfold Beck converge in the village of Whittington, near an even more impressive hall, Whittington Hall. It was designed in 1831 for the Lancaster MP, Thomas Greene, by George Webster, four of whose halls we have already met: Ingmire, Rigmaden, Whelprigg and Underley. It is similarly in the Elizabethan revival style, in this case with medieval features, such as a peel tower. The best view of Whittington Hall is to be had on the path north from Outfield, where a walk is in silence apart from the screech of disturbed pheasants. The hall is seen, from a distance admittedly, with the Howgills and Middleton Fell behind.

East of the Hall is St Michael's Church, which was probably founded as the chapel within the bailey of a motte and bailey castle. The tower, of 1600 or so, is the oldest part of the present church, which was rebuilt in 1875. In the graveyard is a headstone that reads "In memory of Edward Baines of Whittington who died of Asiatic cholera on board the ship Brutus midway to America and was buried at sea June 3rd 1832". Historians of Lancashire will be familiar with Baines's Gazetteer, that is, *The History, Directory and Gazetteer of the County Palatine of Lancaster*, written by Edward Baines in 1824 – which contains details of Whittington's illustrious history. They are, however, not the same Edward Baines and, as far as I can determine, were unrelated.

According to Baines (of the Gazetteer), before the Norman Conquest, Tostig, Earl of Northumbria and brother of Harold II, owned six carucates (over 2 sq km) in Whittington, which was regarded as the capital of the region between Sedbergh, Ingleton and Gressingham. Tostig owned a further 20 sq km within this region. After Tostig's death at the Battle of Stamford Bridge, the estate was broken up and by 1090 Whittington had passed into the hands of Roger of Poitou, who eventually owned all of what was to become Lancashire. At Baines's time, Whittington was one of five parishes in the deanery of Lonsdale (the others being Claughton, Melling, Tatham and Tunstall).

Some of this heritage may be appreciated by a stroll around the village, where several houses bear 17th century dates. The Manor House and T'Owd Rose Tree, both 1658, share the prize for oldest house (subject to appeal). Croft House in Main Street was the birthplace in 1783 of William Sturgeon. As with other Loyne notables, the response is probably: Who?

His plaque in Kirkby Lonsdale church predicted that "His name will be perpetuated as long as the science he cherished continues to exist". The science of electricity has flourished but William Sturgeon has been almost forgotten. As a boy he helped his father poach salmon from the Lune. He was then apprenticed to a cobbler in Old Hutton, near Kirkby Lonsdale, but escaped in 1802 by enlisting in the army where he taught himself enough science to be able to build the first practical electromagnet in 1825 and to design the first rotary electric motor. Perhaps his untutored, practical, blunt, northern ways led to his neglect by the gentlemen scientists of the day.

William Sturgeon plaque

The becks merge to form Newton Beck beyond Newton, which, like Whittington, is old enough to be in the Domesday Book. The beck eventually makes it way past the flood embankment to join the Lune near Higher Broomfield. The finger of land beyond the footbridge over Newton Beck is not publicly accessible and is therefore a haven for birds, such as snipe.

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The Lune from Newton Beck ...

The Lune passes under the bridge for the Wennington-Carnforth railway line. To be precise, it passes through the second of the six arches, which, although the largest, seems not large enough for the Lune to be channelled through. Is there an explanation?

There are, 500m east, a further sixteen arches. The 1847 OS map shows the Lune flowing there, with the present course of the Lune, by Arkholme's Chapel Hill, then being a backwater marked as "old Lune", indicating that before 1847 the Lune had followed its present path. Moreover, there is a second "old Lune" marked, near Melling to the east, indicating a third Lune channel. In short, the Lune has changed course frequently within relatively recent times. It is thought that when the bridge was built in 1867 the embankment between the two sets of arches was on an island in the Lune. Today the Melling Viaduct, which would form the longest bridge across the Lune if only the Lune were still to run under it, stands over ponds in green fields.

The railway line was built to link Furness Railway's eastern station at Carnforth with Midland Railway's 'little North Western' line from Leeds to Lancaster, and hence to link the growing port of Barrow with the industries of Yorkshire. They must have been keen to achieve this as the costs of such a long bridge and the 1km tunnel between Melling and Wennington must have been high. When the Wennington-Lancaster line closed in 1966, the Wennington-Carnforth line became part of the Leeds-Lancaster route.

There were stations at both Arkholme and Melling but they were closed in 1960. There is no footpath on the railway line, the ferry across the Lune ended service in the 1940s, and the ford has fallen into disuse, leaving the two villages, only 1km apart, more separated now than ever.

By fortune or foresight, the road in Arkholme runs from the old ferry (from the Ferryman's Cottage, in fact) west for 1km to meet the Kirkby Lonsdale road at right angles and is therefore a peaceful cul-de-sac. In summer, colourful gardens face the road and there is a prettiness and cheeriness, due to the relative absence of traffic. The houses are strung out higgledy-piggledy, no two alike, some old (17th century), some new (21st century).

Most of the older houses have names indicating their previous lives, although I noticed none that refer to the industry for which Arkholme was best known, the making of baskets, from about 1700 to 1950. This activity was typical of many Loyne industries, being based on some local resource (here, osiers in the Lune floodplain), intended to meet local needs (of, for example, potato growers in Fylde), and passed on as a family trade, but then succumbing to competition from larger, more commercial ventures, especially after the advent of the railways.

The Melling Viaduct

On the other bank, its sister Melling lies mainly along the busy and narrow A683 and as a result its doors and windows are shut, its gardens are away from the road, and people do not linger by the noisy and dangerous traffic. Within Melling, Green Close Studios, which opened in 1997, has focussed on locally-based art activities and in 2009 initiated the Bowland Arts Festival.

The future of Melling Hall, an 18th century manor house, more recently a hotel and now a listed building, has been the subject of a planning debate that is an interesting example of the

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difficulties of conservation policies. The building is a key part of the Melling Conservation Area, and the Lancaster District policy is that no pub or hotel will be converted to residential use unless it can be demonstrated to be no longer viable, even if, as in this case, it was originally a residence. No buyer could be found to sustain it as a hotel and, after some controversy, it has been converted into flats.

Arkholme and Melling are listed in the Domesday Book as Ergune and Mellinge, respectively. The parish boundary between them lies near Melling, where the Lune once flowed. Both Arkholme and Melling had their motte and bailey castles and in both cases a church has been built, as at Whittington, within the bailey. Arkholme's St John the Baptist Church is tucked below, almost into, the motte, which is 30m in diameter. Melling's St Wilfrid's is a larger church, with a long nave and square tower, and is a Biological Heritage Site because of the lichens on its gravestones. The Melling motte is now a feature in the garden of the Old Vicarage.

The old Arkholme railway station

St Wilfrid's Church, Melling

The Arkholme motte is close to the Lune Valley Ramble, which the Lune has accompanied from Kirkby Lonsdale, and below Arkholme the Ramble shares footsteps with the Lunesdale Walk, a name that is even more of an exaggeration than the Ramble since its 59km cover only 6km of the Lune. The walk traces an elaborate figure of eight route from Carnforth to Roeburndale.

The Lune runs by flat, green pastures on the east, where the old Lune has created many ditches and where enormous logs have been left stranded by floods. Bank erosion continues apace, and the Lune shifts between various channels, running by pebble beaches and new islands. To the west, there are gentle hills, on the horizon of which can be seen the turrets of Storrs Hall, which was rebuilt in 1850, and from which minor tributaries such as Bains Beck and Thrush Gill enter the Lune. The hills are not high, reaching only 142m at Cragg Lot, but nevertheless there is an application to put five 125m wind

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turbines on them. This proposal is ominous for the Lune valley, for if turbines are built in such a location then no field and no view within the Lune valley is safe.

The Lune reaches Loyn Bridge, which was built in 1684 or before – it is known that an earlier bridge was reported as dangerous in 1591. The bridge is built of sandstone blocks and has three arches, the outer ones of 16m and the inner of 19m. The piers have pointed cutwaters that provide alcoves on the 4m-wide carriageway. The bridge provides the only vehicular crossing of the Lune for about 8km in either direction. It is clearly sturdy enough to withstand Lune floods but no doubt its builders knew that when the Lune is high it takes a short cut across the fields to the west, as damage to the hedgerows shows.

Erosion of the Lune bank near Arkholme

Above Loyn Bridge to the east is Castle Stede, the remains of a motte and bailey castle (our eighth, if you are counting). When Castle Stede was abandoned as a castle, later buildings did not engulf it, so the original structures are well preserved. We can see the 15m-high motte and the bailey, with its defensive ramparts and ditch, and appreciate the strategic position overlooking the Lune valley. Strictly, it is off the public footpath but it is tempting to wander over the causeway (probably where the original entrance was) into the bailey and transport oneself back to the 12th century by imagining the bustle of activity – kitchens, stables, maybe a chapel – below the lord's hall on the motte.

At Loyn Bridge we enter for the first time the **Forest of Bowland** Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty,

Loyn Bridge

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although we are still some distance from typical Bowland country. The ambivalent regard for the Bowland region is indicated by the inclusion of "Bowland and the Lune Valley" (where they mean the lower Lune valley) as one of twelve projects within the Culture 2000 European Pathways to Cultural Landscapes programme, funded by the European Union. This sounds like an honour indeed – until we read that the project is "dedicated to 'marginal' landscapes, border regions and landscapes whose image is one of poverty and historical insignificance".

The Lune passes below Priory Farm, which is on the site of an old Premonstratensian priory, that is, one belonging to the order of 'White Canons' (from the colour of their habit) founded at Prémontré in France. Shortly after, the small Gressingham Beck enters from the west. This beck gathers the waters from the rolling green hinterland beyond the western ridge and, with High Dam Beck (which runs from the 'high dam' that used to power the mill), channels them through the ancient village of Gressingham.

Gressingham is another of Earl Tostig's holdings that was listed in the Domesday Book (as Ghersinctune) but nothing much has happened here since. The small triangle of homesteads and the line of dwellings by the beck are quietly attractive, as is the church with its 12th century arch in the doorway, but the village does little to draw attention to itself. As far as I am aware, it does not even claim an association with the one thing that makes its name famous, the Gressingham Duck, which features on the best menus. However, assiduous research (I asked the producers of the duck) revealed that "the chap who first bred the duck is called Peter Dodd, [who] lived in the village of Gressingham in Lancashire … the breeding stock [was moved to] Suffolk in 1990".

Next, the River Wenning joins the Lune from the east.

The **Forest of Bowland** was designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in 1964 and its 800 sq km make it the 11th largest of the 41 AONBs in England and Wales. An AONB designation recognises a region's scenic qualities and implies a commitment to conserve its flora, fauna and landscape features, consistent with the needs of residents. Only the northern third of Bowland lies within Loyne. The remainder, reached by the two bleak roads to Slaidburn or through the Trough of Bowland, drains to the Wyre or Ribble.

The Forest of Bowland is a forest in the historical sense of an unenclosed, outlying region of little use except for hunting. Bowland was originally a Royal Forest, although no sovereign is known to have hunted here. However, Henry VI was himself hunted, when in 1465, during the Wars of the Roses, he hid in Bolton-by-Bowland. Traditional hunting has long gone, to be replaced by grouse shooting, mainly on land owned by England's richest aristocrat, the Duke of Westminster. Until the Countryside and Rights of Way Act took effect in 2004 (launched in Bowland), this was England's largest area without public access.

Lower Bowland consists of rolling green pastures with picturesque grey stone buildings. The upland areas are of millstone grit, with thin layers of sandstone and shale on the slopes, giving rise to open and wild upland areas of blanket bog and heather moorland that are incised by fast becks to form steep cloughs and wooded valleys. The wilderness areas of Bowland remain largely unspoilt by exploitation, with the works of the water authorities and the Forestry Commission lying mainly outside Loyne. The higher fells have been maintained in a relatively natural state for the sheep and grouse and, since 2004, humans.

The Norman doorway of Gressingham church

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