The Wenning runs by the Forest of Mewith, below the northern slopes of Burn Moor. Mewith is an area of undulating farmland, with scattered farmsteads, isolated woodlands, many paths and tracks, and no discernible pattern. It is crossed by many becks that flow off Burn Moor, where the county border runs northwest past the Queen of Fairies Chair and the Great Stone of Fourstones. The former is notable only for its name but the latter is a remarkable 4m-high monolith, from which there is a good view across to the Three Peaks.

The Wenning flows calmly between banks of alder, with birds such as common sandpiper, dipper and grey wagtail, although sadly there are few of the sea trout for which the river was once known, partly because so many alien rainbow trout have escaped from a trout farm. The river reaches High Bentham and, shortly after, Low Bentham, which is older but now smaller. High Bentham expanded north, south and east and Low Bentham expanded north, south, and west but recently they have taken tentative steps along the B6480 towards one another. I will consider this dumbbell shape to be Bentham.

Its leaflet for tourists begins with the sentence “Bentham is not a tourist centre”, which must be welcome news for those staying at the large caravan park. Bentham was once more positive, for it had pioneered the idea of a holiday camp, long before Butlin and Pontin. From 1908 to 1925 a tented village was set up on the banks of the Wenning for holidaymakers: single men on the north bank, everyone else on the south bank, with a suspension bridge in between.

Bentham considers itself a market town and shopping centre with an industrial heritage. It appeared as Benetain in the Domestacy Book and was granted a market charter in 1306. High Bentham Mill, using a millrace from the Wenning near Bentham Bridge, was established in 1750, possibly on the site of an old corn mill. It later worked in tandem with Low Mill (built 1785), mainly spinning flax. By 1795 the mills were importing Baltic flax to make sailcloths. The owner in 1814, Hornby Roughsedge, bought Bentham House, which no longer exists, and the manorial rights to Ingleton.

It was Mr Roughsedge who had funded the ill-fated hospice on Ingleborough (mentioned on page 130). His benefaction was more gratefully received in Bentham, where he paid for St Margaret’s Church (Margaret coincidentally being Mrs Roughsedge’s name), built in 1837 on a hill that now overlooks the unstylish Bentham Bridge, which replaced one washed away in 1964.
The mills were bought in 1877 by Benson Ford to manufacture silk. The Ford family were Quakers and their enlightened views on the treatment of employees enhanced the significant Quaker influence upon the region. Quakerism had been strong since the 1650s, with the Calf Cop meetinghouse being established in 1718. The Quakers have generally had a disproportionate influence on Loyne’s society and commerce, to which they directed their energy and enterprise as their religious views barred them from professional and political careers.

The mills once employed up to 800 people and were the dominant factor in village life until they closed in 1970. One derivative company, Angus Fire (now called Kiddes), based on an invention to weave tubes to make fire hoses, still operates but now on a site across the railway line, the original mill site having been converted for small businesses and residences.

Before the 19th century, Bentham was unusual in having no wealthy gentry to build large mansions. There are some rows of 17th century cottages and Collingwood Terrace has an intriguing conception. In 1726 the will of William Collingwood of York provided for “the maintenance and support of six old decayed housekeepers in [Bentham], men and women, six of each sex”. I don’t know why he was so grateful to the housekeepers of Bentham. According to its plaque, we owe the continued existence of the terrace to a Mrs Titterington, who provided funds in 1900 to restore the houses as bungalows.

To the west of Bentham, the Wenning is joined by Eskew Beck, which begins life as County Beck near the Great Stone of Fourstones. Eskew Beck is important for its exposures of Carboniferous rocks with rare fossils. The county border is along County Beck and Eskew Beck and then continues west along the Wenning. The greater importance of county borders in earlier times, when, for example, fugitives could escape the law by crossing them, is reflected in the history of Robert Hall, just to the south. It was built in the 16th century for the Cansfield family, who, as recusant Catholics, needed hiding places and escape routes.

To the southwest of Robert Hall is a moor that has miraculously escaped the notice of man until recently, for it has never been ploughed or drained. Consequently, this is a Site of Special Scientific Interest for being “the only extensive example of species-rich undrained and unimproved base-flushed neutral grassland in Lancashire”, including several rare plant communities. To the non-specialist, it gives an idea of what would be the natural state of this drumlin scenery.

In contrast, to the north at Clintsfield the signs of human activity are evident, with the only significant remains of the local coal mining industry. The old engine house, which operated until about 1840 and was later converted to a dwelling, and its adjoining square chimney still stand, more or less, and traces of the ten or more coal pits marked on old maps are still visible.

Above Clintsfield is The Blands, which was gutted by fire in 2009. All the old farmsteads of Loyne, with the intertwined families and colourful characters that lived in them, have interesting histories but surely none can match that of The Blands, once the home of Perpetual Arthur.

Just to the west, four pipes cross above the railway line. This is the continuation of the Haweswater Aqueduct, which we saw crossing the Lune near Kirkby Lonsdale. The pipes go under the Wenning and then up and over the railway. The aqueduct is gravity-fed (that is, there are no pumps) but it is clearly not downhill all the way. It is a single 2m pipe along most of its length but
is split into four smaller cast-iron pipes to cross rivers and valleys.

Shortly after, the Wenning reaches its eponymous village, Wennington, a triangle of houses around a green bisected by the B6480. Its appearance has been improved by the restoration of the old Foster’s Arms Hotel, empty for many years. Wennington Hall, now a school, lies to the north. It was re-designed in a Tudor-Gothic style by Edward Paley in 1855. A notice at the gate informs us of its history, including the fact that a motto of the Morley family (who owned the hall from 1330 to 1678) is inscribed in the headmaster’s study: “S’ils te mordent, mord les” – ‘if they bite you, bite them’, which I trust hasn’t been adopted as the school motto.

At Wennington, the dismantled railway line to Lancaster and the still-existing line to Carnforth separate, with the Wenning continuing beside the former. It passes under the large Tatham Bridge, which can be barely seen from the road. It has five arches, including one for the railway, which it therefore does not pre-date. The line opened in 1849 and for the first six months ran from Lancaster only as far as a temporary Tatham Station, just beyond the bridge. The bridge provides access to the neat St James the Less Church, on a site where a church is thought to have existed since Saxon times.

East of Tatham Hall on a small hill by Tatham Park Wood are various mounds and ditches that look like the remains of old settlements, although they are not marked as such on maps. According to old maps, there were many coal pits (Moorhead Pits) to the east. The nearby Netherwood Hall is much too trim to retain its old name of Bottom.

Below Hornby Park Wood the River Hindburn joins the Wenning.

**Perpetual Arthur** was the nickname of Arthur Burrow (1759-1827), who owned The Blands from 1787. This relatively uneducated but multi-talented man became a local legend for his many activities: blacksmith by trade, he mined coal surreptitiously under The Blands, an entrance to the shaft being conveniently close by the fireside; he knew the bible better than many theologians, after being taught to read in one night by an angel (according to him); he built mysterious niches in his sunken garden, possibly to intrigue gullible antiquarians; he distilled liquor; he ran plum fairs; and he fathered thirteen children.

But the activity by which he was best known was his unceasing quest to develop a perpetual motion machine, an endeavour that attracted the interest of eminent engineers of the day. Arthur would talk eloquently, enthusiastically and at great length on his ideas for perpetual motion (and on the bible, for that matter) if given half a chance. This was, of course, in the early days of the Industrial Revolution, when self-taught engineers were rapidly developing new forms of power from coal and water. He redirected the nearby beck to run under his house, which may have helped to sustain the illusion of perpetual motion.

The *History of the Parish of Tunstall* considers that “he had a touch of genius which, had his education been sufficiently good, might have ranked him among the world’s great men.” No doubt, if he had actually invented a perpetual motion machine then he wouldn’t be all but forgotten today.

*Right: The remains of the engine house of Clintsfield coal mine.*
By the time it reaches Botton Bridge the River Hindburn is already a considerable size, having gathered up all the becks that drain Greenbank Fell, Botton Head Fell and Whitray Fell below the semi-circular ridge that runs to the ancient Cross of Greet (which is no longer a cross but a large boulder with a socket in which a cross may once have stood). This is a vast area of peat bogs and heather, turning to grass tussocks lower down. It is all CRoW land but walking here is more of a challenge than a pleasure. In winter, there are only grouse for company. From the ridge there are broad views of Pendle and the southern Bowland Fells and to the north Whernside looks particularly noble (Ingleborough always does). The alignment of the ridges – Ingleborough, Whernside, Gragareth, and Middleton Fell – shows clearly that they all belong to Loyne.

There is a rough path from the Cross of Greet to the highest point of the ridge, White Hill (544m), but it has few visitors, most of whom are puzzled by the tower that stands near the trig point. It’s about 4m high, with a notch in the top. It is in fact the middle of three towers in a line, the other two being 500m north and south. The other two cannot be seen when standing at the middle one but if you walk to them you will see the notch of the middle one back on the horizon.

If you have followed the narrative carefully, you may suspect an answer to the puzzle. I think they are sighting pillars used for surveying the Haweswater Aqueduct, which we last saw near Wennington. If we extrapolate the line of the towers on an OS map then we find “air vents” marked on the exact line 3kms in both directions. The towers seem to mark the line of the aqueduct below our feet as we stand on White Hill. It is a surprising thought, in the bleak emptiness of White
Hill, but the aqueduct must cross the Bowland Fells somewhere and it certainly doesn’t go over them.

Other than the towers, there is no trace of this engineering feat on the ground but if we plod over to Round Hill on Botton Head Fell we may visit a much older engineering construction that is (just about) visible. We have passed many Roman roads on our journey but have always had to take the expert’s word for it. Here we might be able to convince ourselves that the slightly raised ridge that runs between Goodman Syke and Dale Beck is the line of a Roman road. It is actually more convincing to view from a distance, for example, from the footpath between Botton Bridge and Botton Head. This is the Roman road that we have tracked from Over Burrow past Low Bentham and that is now heading for Ribchester.

Just above Botton Mill there is a permissive path that enables access to Summersgill Fell. Here, at the parish boundary fence, the nearest visible road or building is far distant: ideal for those allergic to humanity or fond of nude fell-walking (or, especially, both). A walk here

_Above: Looking towards the Three Peaks from White Hill._

_Below: The tower on White Hill._
in spring is not, however, in silence: agitated lapwings, curlews and grouse will attempt to distract you from their nests.

Once off the open fell we are among the lush green pastures of the several farmsteads in the upper Hindburn valley. Apart from the intrusive conifer plantation at Higher Thrushgill, the map looks unchanged from a century or two ago, and moreover most of the farmsteads are still farmsteads, unlike most dales we have visited, where many are derelict or converted into residences and holiday cottages. There is an appealing timelessness here, with the farms going about their business, nestled below the rough fell and with open views across to Ingleborough and the Lake District.

In contrast to nearby Keasdendale, the Hindburn valley is crossed by many footpaths, which, to judge from the curiosity of the sheep, are not often used. The Hindburn passes below the quiet village of Lowgill, a gathering of a score or so cottages on the line of the Roman road. There’s also a primary school for about
forty pupils, some of whom must travel far to get here and understandably so for the school is known for the quality of education provided. The only other public building seems to be the Wesleyan Chapel of 1866. To the north, above Mill Bridge, is the older (but rebuilt in 1888) and more impressive Church of the Good Shepherd, a fitting name for this rural area.

To the south of Lowgill, at Ivah Great Hill, a new woodland of native trees was created in 2003 by the community group Treesponsibility’s nifty scheme of engaging local people in tree-planting, to help slow global warming. We, or at least those who planted trees, are welcome to visit to see the trees growing.

Three kilometres below Lowgill, the Hindburn passes under a bridge built in 1840 and carved with the name of

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**Walk 20: Middle Hindburndale and Lowgill**

*Map:* OL41 (please read the general note about the walks in the Introduction).

*Starting point:* A large lay-by east of Ridges on the Wray to Low Bentham back road (633679).

Walks in the upper Hindburn do not compare with other high-level walks I’ve suggested: it is better to stroll through the farmsteads of the middle Hindburn around Lowgill.

This walk uses four bridges over the Hindburn to make a route of three loops. There is some walking on roads but they are generally quiet. Careful use of the OS map is needed, to locate about fifty stiles or gates.

Take the path that starts on the drive to Ridges and skirts around Riggs Farm next to it, continuing on the path south and then southeast (diverted through a wood) to the Furnessford Road. Over Furnessford Bridge take the path past the barn and up a fine old track through the wood to Birks Farm, dated 1667. The four large manholes seen here and by Riggs Farm mark the line of the Haweswater Aqueduct. Follow the road southeast past Park House and take the track to Lower Houses. Turn left and after 0.5km drop down east by a wooded gully to a footbridge over the Hindburn.

Head south across an open field to the barn seen ahead. Then walk up through the wood behind it and across the fields, heading for Lowgill School. Walk south through Lowgill to High Ivah (along the line of the Roman road), and drop down southwest across the field to Stairend Bridge. Continue on the road past Botton Mill. After 1km turn left through Lower Thrushgill, continuing east to walk across a field and down to a footbridge. Continue for 0.5km to join the bridleway through Swans (0.5km north) and back to Stairend Bridge.

Walk 100m to the road corner again and this time take the path north, by the Hindburn. Follow this path for 2km past a few derelict barns back to the wooded gully, and drop to the footbridge again. Over it, this time turn left through a wood and up to the road near Mill Bridge, 1km east. Turn left and cross the bridge and, after an optional detour to the Church of the Good Shepherd, continue on the road north for 2.5km to Spen Lodge. Beware of traffic as you contemplate the views of distant hills.

Beyond Spen Lodge take the footpath through Little Plantation if it is not too overgrown – otherwise continue on the road and turn left onto Furnessford Road. Take the path west below Trimble Hall to rejoin the path from Ridges.

*Short walk variation:* Clearly, using only three, two or one of the bridges will shorten the walk. However, parking in the valley is not easy although there is space on the corner near the track to Swans (655640). The best of the short walks is the loop south from there through Lower Thrushgill and Swans, combined, if you have time, with a loop north to Over Houses Great Wood and back through Lowgill.
Furnessford Bridge, although the 1847 OS map calls it Furnaceford Bridge. Below the bridge there are no footpaths by the Hindburn, which is a pity as it runs prettily by steep cliffs over minor waterfalls. I hardly need to say what Mill Houses used to be but I ought to mention the nearby meadow on the footpath from Clear Beck Bridge. This meadow is too small to have been affected by modern agriculture and as a result is a Site of Special Scientific Interest for being “one of the best examples of species-rich meadow grassland in Lancashire”. It is so rich, in fact, that over 130 species have been recorded.

Clear Beck joins the Hindburn after Hindburn Bridge, running from Clearbeck House, which has a garden with follies, sculptures, a lake, and views of Ingleborough. The house is one of about twenty studios on the Lunesdale Studio Trail, in which local artists open their studios each summer to enable visitors to see their work in paintings, textiles, prints, sculptures, mosaics, jewellery, ceramics, drawings and photography.

Below Wray Bridge, the River Hindburn and the River Roeburn come together, as nature intends.

The River Roeburn

We were once accosted by a friendly couple in Roeburndale who felt that they had discovered the best place in England and often journeyed over from Blackpool to savour it. They were pleased, not disappointed, to find others who shared their secret. The view from the brow of the road after passing Thornbush is enchanting: to the alpine-like green pastures down by the woods up to the conical peak of Mallowdale Pike and beyond, with the Three Peaks arrayed on the left. And Roeburndale encompasses both the ancient and the new, as we’ll see.

The River Roeburn rises at the old Yorkshire-Lancashire county border below Wolfhole Crag (527m) and Salter Fell. This is open fell country, far from any road and therefore likely to be deserted. It was not always so, for Hornby Road (or the Old Salt Road) was once an important route and in its southern part coincides with the Roman road that came up Round Hill from Lowgill.

It is possible that the CRoW policy will give a new lease of life to Hornby Road. The track, which is

Wolfhole Crag
unusable by cars, provides an excellent walking surface, although distances are long and any loop off-track involves strenuous going. Walking north, the view that opens up at Alderstone Bank is remarkable, with a long-distance 180° horizon from Black Combe to Ingleborough. The track marked on OS maps as going to a shooting cabin on Mallowdale Fell now continues over the ridge to join the track from Tarnbrook Fell. It may therefore be used to reach the ridge path to Ward’s Stone but there will be awkward bogs around Brown Syke after wet weather.

If you walk up here you will become aware of the screeching gulls that nest on Mallowdale Fell and Tarnbrook Fell. These are a relatively new phenomenon, first being reported in 1936. There are now over 25,000 pairs nesting annually, forming England’s largest inland colony of lesser black-backed gulls. Thousands more are culled to avoid possible bacterial contamination of the Lancaster water supply.

Hornby Road is a recommended route for mountain bikers, who are (at the moment) not allowed on the increasing numbers of tracks on the Bowland Fells proper. It is also part of the 45km North Lancashire Bridleway, opened in 2004. This runs from Denny Beck, Halton via Roerburn to Chipping. Let us hope that the few residents in these remote areas benefit from, rather than resent, these new activities.

On Mallowdale Pike there is a memorial cairn to one Anthony Mason-Hornby (1931-1994). The cairn gives no explanation for its presence here. The area was out of bounds to the public until the CRoW Act took effect in 2004. Very few walkers will take advantage of the opportunity to venture here but even so it is a regrettably growing practice for private grief to impose upon special places, without good reason.

At Mallowdale the Roeburn leaves the open fell to run through woods past Lower Salter to be joined by Bladder Stone Beck (what a charming name) and Goodber Beck, which runs in a deep ravine from the empty grasslands of Goodber Common. Even the most desolate areas have their uses. The large heath butterfly, one of only two English butterflies that are on the European list of threatened species, breeds here. Hare’s tail cotton grass, its main larval food plant, flourishes on the Common.

The Roeburn runs through 5km of Roerburndale Woods, one of the most extensive deciduous woodlands

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The Top 10 body-parts in Loyne

1. Bladder Stone Beck, Roerburndale
2. Bosom Wood, Cautley
3. Backside Beck, east Howgills
4. High Stephen’s Head, near Ward’s Stone
5. Fleshbeck, below Old Town
6. Rotten Bottom, Dentdale
7. Heartside Plantation, Middleton Fell
8. Hand Lake, north Howgills
9. Long Tongue, Cockerham Sands
10. Bone Hill, near Pilling
in Lancashire, which is perhaps not saying much as it one of the least wooded counties of England. These woods provided an enclave for the red squirrel (until recently: I have heard no recent reports of red squirrels here). A permissive path in Outhwaite Wood enables us to see as we walk north the gradations of tree types, reflecting the changes of soil, from lime, birch, hazel and alder to ash, elm and oak.

In a clearing opposite Outhwaite Wood is the Middle Wood environmental centre. This was established in 1984 to “advance, research and provide education for the public benefit in those techniques of farming, forestry, wildlife and countryside management, building, energy utilisation and human lifestyle, which are in tune with the natural cycle and which do not upset the long term ecological balance.” Quite foresighted, then, and today a range of ecological buildings for sustainable development can be seen. The study centre uses solar panels and a wood-burning stove for heat and is powered by wind power. The community yurt (a Mongolian circular tent) is the main meeting place. Whenever I pass through only a few wisps of smoke at most seem to disturb the
air of away-from-it-all self-sufficiency. After years of apparently anonymous inactivity, the centre is now so vigorously advertising its facilities (courses, website, shop, study centre, rural classroom, camping barn) that it is in danger of becoming mainstream.

As the Roeburn nears the village of Wray it is joined by Hunt’s Gill Beck, which runs past Smeer Hall. Here the last coal pit in the region closed in 1896. On the Roeburn’s right bank is a line of cottages associated with the old Wray Mill. Like many mills we have passed, it dates back centuries and went through many incarnations (cotton, wool, bobbins, silk, and so on) in a valiant attempt to survive, before finally succumbing in the 20th century.

Just after the mill cottages, the Roeburn passes under Kitten Bridge, the first of three bridges in Wray, the others being Wray Bridge over the Roeburn and Meal Bank Bridge over the Hindburn. The first and last were washed away in the notorious flood of August 1967 and have since been replaced. Wray Bridge survived but perhaps it would have been better if it hadn’t, because the logs and debris piled up against the bridge, causing the torrent to back up and demolish a number of cottages. Luckily, there were no casualties but 37 people were made homeless. The event is commemorated in a garden close by Wray Bridge.

Some of the cottages washed away used to be the homes of various Wray artisans, because from about 1700 to 1850 Wray was a veritable hive of industry. Apart from the mill and local mining and quarrying, Wray was known for the production of hats, nails, clogs and baskets. It is unclear why Wray in particular became an industrial centre but no doubt once it began to build a reputation it was enhanced by other workers being attracted to the area for employment. The industries were relatively short-lived and Wray has since relaxed into a quiet, commuting community.

A walk up the Main Street from Wray Bridge reveals some of this history. First impressions suggest that Wray is different from other Loyne villages. The grey, stone buildings and converted farms and cottages are familiar but they are set back from the road, with cobbled areas in front. By Loyne standards, Wray is a new village, as it is not listed in the Domesday Book. It was designed, if

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**Walk 21: Roeburndale**

*Map:* OL41 (please read the general note about the walks in the Introduction).  
*Starting point:* Just north of the cattle grid north of Barkin Bridge (601638).

This walk gives a tour of middle Roeburndale, with views up to the wilderness of upper Roeburndale. It first makes use of a new permissive path to and through Outhwaite Wood. This path is not marked on OS maps but there are clear signs to follow, the first being by a stile a few metres northwest of the cattle grid. The footpath sign is a symbol of a deer: I hope that encouraging us to look for them doesn’t scare them away.

The path crosses two fields and then drops down (rather muddily) to cross a new footbridge to the east bank. There are good views at times of the Roeburn below. The path continues just outside the wood, which it eventually enters. It then joins a loop walk within Outhwaite Wood. Take the lower path of the loop (it isn’t necessary to cross the swing bridge to the camping barn, but it’s fun to do so (twice)). After 1km the path emerges below the wood and joins the public footpath that has crossed the footbridge from Middle Wood. Continue north and then east up the path into fields.

Follow the footpath until it nearly reaches the road and then turn right, following the path for 3km above Outhwaite farm, past Wray Wood Moor, and all the way to Harterbeck, where Goodber Beck forms an impressive waterfall. Cut southwest across fields for 1km to reach High Salter, where Hornby Road ceases to be a road.

Drop down behind High Salter, cross Mallowdale Bridge, and after Mallowdale farm cross a footbridge to enter Melling Wood. This path climbs up to give good views down into secluded Mallow Gill. At Haylot Farm take the paved road down to the Irish bridge across the Roeburn. Pass Lower Salter, with its tiny Methodist church, and return to Barkin Bridge.

The map shows other footpaths that may be used to shorten (or lengthen) the walk but avoid the one shown crossing Goodber Beck in Park House Wood: a safe crossing point is hard to find and anyway slippage has made the path unusable. A stile linking Bowskill Wood and CReW land (at 611646) enables many variations on our route.

*Short walk variation:* Any short walk is, of course, constrained by the need to find bridges to cross the various rivers and becks. One possibility is to follow the long walk as far as the footbridge to Middle Wood and to then cross the bridge and walk via Back Farm and the road back to Barkin Bridge. Another possibility is to complete the southern half of the long walk, that is, to walk south from Barkin Bridge, east through Lower Salter to the waterfall at Harterbeck and then follow the long walk from there.
that is not too bold a term, by the then Lord of Hornby in the 13th century for his farm workers. The farm buildings were set out on the wide street, with a village green at the north end.

All except one of the farms have been converted into residences but the original forms can still be discerned. Overall, if Main Street were without its multitude of parked cars then it would have a picturesque quality of bygone times. The green, however, no longer exists, as the B6480 was built across it. With the original road, now called The Gars, it has made an island of Wray House and a few other houses.

Despite its youth, Wray seems proud of its age: almost every house bears a datestone, usually of the 17th century, even one built in the 20th century. One of the first houses met on the walk up Main Street from Wray Bridge is that of Richard Pooley, or Captain Richard Pooley as he insisted on being called. He flourished in the Civil War and returned to the family home in Wray to bequeath £200 a year to establish a primary school in 1684. A plaque on the school wall confirms this; a second asserts that “Bryan Holme (1776-1856) founder of the Law Society was at school here” (there should be an “a” before “founder”, as he did not do so alone). The school is, unusually, not a church school, possibly because it pre-dates local churches: Holy Trinity Church was built in 1840 and the Methodist Chapel in 1867.

Anyone interested in rural architecture will enjoy a stroll along Main Street. But not on May Bank Holidays, for then the village and the roads around are jammed for the Wray Fair, featuring the celebrated Scarecrow Festival. The festival is part of an ancient springtime ritual, passed down through generations of Wray residents, dating all the way back to … 1996. The idea was copied from a village in the Pyrenees in an attempt to promote the Wray Fair. It succeeded beyond anyone’s hopes and now tens of thousands visit, mainly to see the scarecrows. Rather ironically, if that is your intention then it is better to avoid the fair itself, as the scarecrows adorn the village in the days before the fair, to the distraction of unsuspecting passing motorists. Those industrious workers of the 18th century, striving to make a bare living, would be bemused by the feverish activity of today’s villagers, as they strive to out-scarecrow one another.

Beyond Wray Bridge the Roeburn joins the Hindburn, which continues uneventfully for 2km to join the Wenning.

The Wenning from the Hindburn

The Wenning swings south below Hornby Castle, a prominent landmark of the lower Lune valley. The Earl of Montbegon was granted the Hornby estate after the Norman Conquest and was no doubt based at Castle Stede by the Lune at first. At some time the village was relocated, with a castle being built on the present site in the 13th century. By the early 16th century the manor was in the hands of Sir Edward Stanley, or Lord Monteagle as he became after bravery at Flodden. It was the 4th Lord Monteagle who received the warning letter about the Gunpowder Plot of 1605. Actually, the letter advised him to stay away from Parliament, which may suggest that the plotters considered him to be a sympathetic friend.

As a Royalist stronghold the castle was besieged during the Civil War but for some reason was not demolished after capture as it was supposed to be. In time, however, all of the castle except the central tower fell into ruin and has been replaced. Despite appearances, the present structure is mainly of the second half of the 19th century, when it was remodelled in the Gothic style, complete with battlements. The castle can be viewed from Tatham or from the Lune valley with Ingleborough behind or, at closer quarters, from Hornby Bridge, with the lawns sweeping down from the castle.

The castle’s structures are echoed in the octagonal tower of St Margaret’s Church, built by the 1st Lord Monteagle. It is probably on the site of an older church, as it houses several ancient stones and crosses, one, the ‘loaves and fishes’ cross, probably being pre-Norman. Opposite St Margaret’s is the Catholic Church of St Mary, built in 1820, with the presbytery nearby, where the noted historian John Lingard lived. By the presbytery is indubitably the oldest bus stop in England, with a datestone of 1629.

The two Grade I listed buildings (the castle and St Margaret’s) set standards that the rest of Hornby does well to live up to, which it does via a further 26 Grade II listed structures. The main street has a number of fine sandstone buildings and the institute has recently been refurbished at a cost of £1.3m. Unfortunately, the Castle Hotel, an old coaching inn, is letting the side down by remaining boarded up and looking increasingly derelict.

Right: Hornby Castle and the Wenning.
The quiet residential tone reflects the fact that Hornby, despite the market charter granted in 1292, never developed any significant industrial activity, unlike nearby Wray. In fact, its market town status had lapsed by the 19th century.

The Wennington-Lancaster railway line ran to the south of Hornby, enabling a short-lived livestock market. Nearby is an interesting building built in 1872 by the Lunesdale Poor Law Union as a workhouse for the poor of 22 parishes. As with many other buildings, it has been redeveloped for residential use.

I once sat for some time by the Wenning Bridge in Hornby watching a heron attempting to swallow an eel longer than itself - longer than its neck, at least. It managed, somehow. There is concern about the declining number of eels in the Lune, as in most British rivers. I don’t think the heron is to blame. As with the salmon, causes may be man-made (the various barriers we have built to the eels’ migration up the rivers) and natural (infections with parasites). DEFRA’s 2008 Eel Management Plan for the North West River Basin District is on the case.

As the Wenning approaches the Lune it runs in a much straighter line than in earlier times, with old river channels visible on the south bank. Looking back from the Lune, the Wenning points directly to its source on the eastern flanks of Ingleborough.

John Lingard (1771-1851) is a rarity in Loyne – someone who achieved eminence through activities within the region. The plaque at the presbytery reads “Home of Dr John Lingard, Catholic priest and historian, 1811-1851”, which needs careful interpretation. The dates are those for which the presbytery was Dr Lingard’s home, not those of Dr Lingard himself. The Catholic Encyclopedia says that he “retired to Hornby” in 1811 and refers to the “fruits of his leisure there”. It is a little unclear, therefore, how active he was as a Catholic priest in Hornby.

The ambiguity in “Catholic priest and historian” is probably deliberate, for a key question is whether Dr Lingard was a Catholic historian or a historian. He wrote his eight-volume The History of England whilst living in Hornby, the last volume appearing in 1830. The history was later re-published in ten and then thirteen volumes. This monumental work is important because, firstly, it provided a comprehensive account of English history that has been respected ever since it was first published and, secondly, his methodology of not relying upon general opinion but of going back to primary sources helped to change the nature of historical research.

Inevitably, that general opinion did not always agree with Lingard’s interpretations but he was always able to refer back to his sources. Nowadays, we would not expect the dispassionate objectivity that Lingard sought. It is hardly surprising that his most controversial sections concerned the Reformation, for he was, after all, a Catholic. Nor that he was virtually ignored by academia but revered by Catholics, so much so that it is thought that he was made cardinal in petto (that is, in secret, to be announced later) by Pope Leo XII.