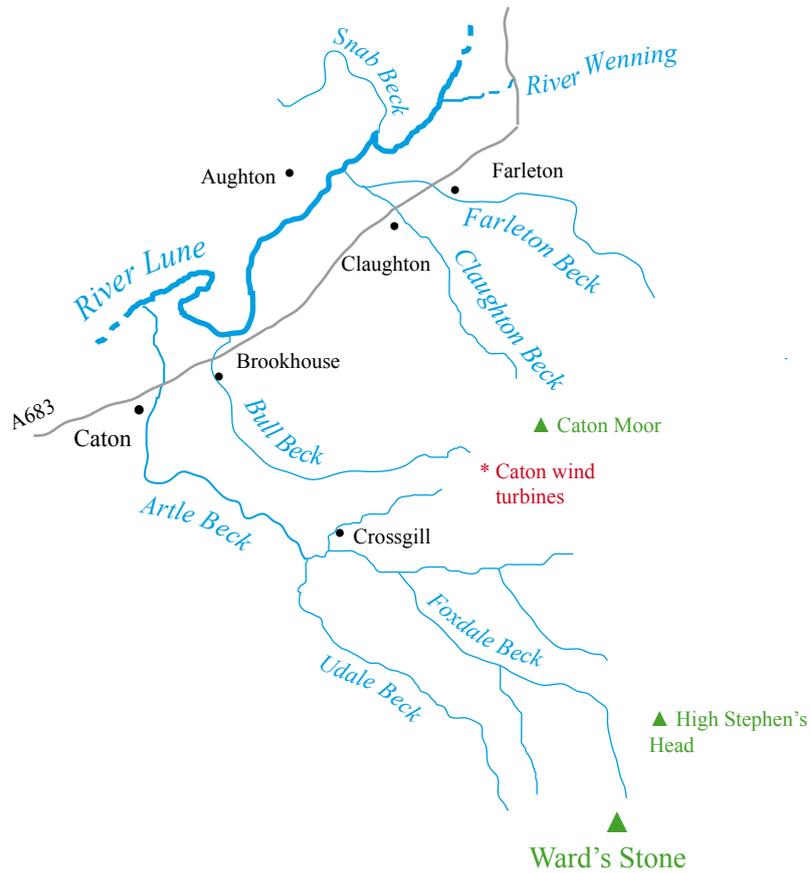


**CHAPTER 12:  
The Lune Floodplain  
and the  
Top of Bowland**





*The Wenning joins the Lune*

### The Lune from the Wenning ...

The augmented Lune flows in the middle of its floodplain and there is naturally a sense of remoteness, with wide views back to Hornby and across to Claughton Moor. Birds of the river congregate here and noisily object to being disturbed. In early spring hundreds of curlew gather on the flat fields on their way upriver to their breeding grounds.

There are footpaths on both banks of the river, although walkers are rare in the middle section. On the east bank, a permissive path from Hornby eventually joins the public footpath below Claughton and on the west bank the Lune Valley Ramble continues. The Ramble cuts across from the Lune to The Snab, leaving a long sweep of the Lune to the birdlife. The ponds that have formed here are well used by swan, coot, moorhen and heron. Above The Snab, on the footpath to Eskrigge, there are good views across to Hornby, with Ingleborough behind, and it's also possible to see the flat green centre of the ancient moat near Camp House.

Snab Beck makes its way to the Lune, running from Higher Snab through a deep, wooded gully. The beck

used to be a fast-flowing tributary of the Lune until its banks were silted up from the trampling of cattle and sheep. The Lune Rivers Trust has tried to restore the beck to its former state in the hope of attracting back wildlife that has been lost, such as otter and water vole. Otters are regularly recorded within Loyne but not so regularly that the event is not thought worth recording. It has been seen between Arkholme and Caton quite often and also upriver at Tebay and Sedbergh and on the Wenning and Roeburn tributaries. Water voles are thought to have declined by over 90% since 1960 because of loss of habitat and predation by the American mink that has escaped from fur farms. The water vole was given full legal protection in 2008.

Snab Beck now runs below the footpath and then out to a large isolated pond, before following a route west back to the Lune, which is soon joined on the opposite bank by the combined forces of Farleton Beck and Claughton Beck.

*Two pages before: The Lune at Lawson's Wood.*

### Farleton Beck and Claughton Beck

Farleton Beck and Claughton Beck are usually small and sluggish but it is not always so. In 1967, on the day of the Wray flood, similar but not so extensive damage was caused in the villages of Farleton and Claughton, through which the becks flow. The level of the flood is marked on the wall inside the Fenwick Arms.

Farleton is a cul-de-sac of mainly new houses lined up around the old farms of Bank House and Brades. Farleton's only claim to fame is that in 1920 the owner of the garage that used to exist next to the Old Toll House was the first to paint white lines on a road, in order to help motorists negotiate the dangerous corner. This fact is so often repeated that it has become a self-evident truth. However, it is my sad duty to report that many websites assert that Edward Hines, traffic engineer of Detroit, used white lines in 1912. Ah well, it wasn't such a glorious claim to fame, anyway.

Claughton Beck arises on Claughton Moor and runs through the clay pit of Claughton brickworks, now owned by Hanson Brick Ltd. This industry has survived, against the odds, since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. One of the aerial ropeways installed in about 1900 is still used to bring down the clay and shale from the moor and is thought to be the last such ropeway still in use in England. The view into the pit, with the buckets swinging overhead, is a glimpse of a bygone industrial age. The pit, incidentally, is not as large as might be imagined for a century's



*The clay pit of Claughton brickworks*

worth of bricks but for those concerned that the whole of Claughton Moor might eventually be carried away in these buckets it is reassuring that planning permission for mineral extraction ends in 2018. The pit is due to be returned to a natural state by 2020. Actually, quarrying to the south and west of the pit has already ended, as rock,



*The Claughton ropeway*

rather than shale, has been reached but enough shale to last about forty years lies to the east of the present pit. No doubt, an application to extend the present permission will be made in due course.

Halfway down the hill, Claughton Beck runs behind Claughton Hall, which has a magnificent view of Ingleborough and the Howgills. The hall, parts of which are said to be of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, looks grim and austere, with its front always in the shade. It is hard to get a close view of the hall because it is surrounded by fences, plantations and the bank of a large, new pond. There are two unequally large, stern towers, with oddly placed small windows and uneven roofs, and tall, narrow chimneys. It is difficult to believe that in the 1930s this hall was moved stone-by-stone from its position in Claughton and rebuilt to the original plan here, without the opportunity for more substantial change being taken. Perhaps the labourers reflected upon this while, as they hauled the stones up, the clay for new bricks was passing down over their heads.

Claughton Hall is owned by the Oyston family, which may explain its increasing reclusion. Owen Oyston, a media tycoon, was jailed for six years in 1996 after being controversially convicted of rape. After a groundbreaking legal battle to establish that it wasn't necessary to admit guilt first, he was released on parole in 1999. But his trademark sheepskin coat and large fedora have gone, and no longer do the bison roam extrovertly in the field in front of the hall as they used to.

Claughton Hall Farm, an old building of character, was left where it was, next to St Chad's Church, a medieval church re-built in 1815. One of the two bells is dated 1296, making it the oldest dated bell in England. As with Farleton's claim to fame, I am afraid that I have to pour some cold water. In 2002 St Chad's was declared redundant and permission granted for it to be converted to residential use. In 2005 there was a planning application to remove the bells so that they may be displayed in St Margaret's Church, Hornby, although in 2009 they seemed to be still with St Chad's.



*Sunset over a Lune-side lagoon*



*Bluebells in Burton Wood*

### **The Lune from Farleton Beck and Claughton Beck ...**

The Lune Valley Ramble passes Afton Barn Cottage, which is a kind attempt to help us with the pronunciation of the village above it, Aughton. I'm tempted to suggest an extra f is needed but it depends on how you say "good afternoon". Although most of Aughton's buildings have been adapted for Lancaster commuters, one or two barns managed to survive until the present ban on conversion came into force. The houses are arranged around a triangle, mainly on the two quiet sides (not that the third side is busy).

The village stirs itself every 21 years for the Aughton Pudding Festival, at which the 'world's largest pudding' is prepared. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Aughton, like other Lune villages, made baskets from osiers, which were made more supple by boiling. In 1782 someone

had the bright idea to use the osier-boiler to make a large pudding, which became a tradition, which then lapsed and was revived in 1971. On the last occasion a concrete mixer was used. Why 21 years? I suppose it takes that long to forget what a jolly silly idea it is. (It is said to be because they used to cut the willow beds down every 21 years but does that require a large pudding?) Note it in your diary: the next great pudding is due in 2013.

Above Aughton, at appropriately named Whinney Hill, is the Thoroughbred Rehabilitation Centre, opened by Princess Anne in 2007. This transferred here from Nateby, near Preston, and is said to be Europe's first charity dedicated to the welfare of ex-racehorses.

Aughton Woods line the steep northern slopes above the floodplain. These woodlands have probably never been cleared and include many species, such as birch, oak, elm, ash and, notably, the small-leaved lime. The woods, however, are not entirely natural, as

there are remains of about thirty charcoal hearths and a much sycamore, an alien tree, has had to be removed. The Wildlife Trust manages parts of the area, some of which are County Biological Heritage Sites. There are permissive footpaths in Burton Wood and Lawson's Wood, allowing extensive banks of bluebells to be viewed in spring.

Opposite Burton Wood the Lune turns on a huge meander. The lines of the parish boundaries and the public footpaths show that the course of the Lune has changed here. For some years the owner of the land on the south bank, eroded by the Lune, insisted that walkers must follow the official line of the footpath, that is, into the middle of the Lune. Happily, a permissive path on the bank was eventually agreed.

At the furthest point of the meander the Lune runs by the dismantled Wennington-Lancaster railway line, which at this point forms the beginning (or end) of the River Lune Millennium Park, a leisure area leading to Salt Ayre in Lancaster. Here also Bull Beck joins the Lune.

## Bull Beck

**B**ull Beck rises as Tarn Brook – a name whose significance you may ponder for a minute – in the shadow of the **Caton wind turbines** and near the spoil heaps of the disused Claughton Quarries. The new picnic site at the top of Quarry Road provides a fine view over the Lune valley to the Lakeland hills, accompanied by the hum, or more often the squeal, of the wind turbines. Tarn Brook runs through a narrow wooded valley in a region of old farmsteads such as Annas Ghyll and Moorside Farm. The substantial Moorgarth was built in the 1820s as a workhouse for 150 paupers from parishes within about 15km. It was closed after an inspection in 1866 found it “wholly unsuitable” for the care of the poor and later, in 1902, it was converted into a residence for the architect Harry Paley, son of the Paley of Paley & Austin.

Tarn Brook becomes Bull Beck in honour of the Black Bull, the 16<sup>th</sup> century (or older) public house in the village of Brookhouse, a name that underlines the



*The wind turbines on Caton Moor*

The **Caton wind turbines** were the first modern windmills to be constructed in Loyne – and the second. Elsewhere in the Lune valley, wind turbine proposals have led to heated debates and campaigning in STILE, that is, in ‘Stop Turbines In the Lunesdale Environment’, seemingly oblivious of the fact that they are already here. Perhaps the second set of wind turbines, twice as high as the first, are more difficult to not notice.

Ten wind turbines were erected in 1994, even though the site is within the Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Its closeness to the pit being gouged out by Claughton brickworks made it hard to argue that the area was so outstanding that it must not be spoiled. These turbines had a maximum capacity of 3MW, enough to power about 1700 households.

In 2006 they were replaced by eight turbines, yielding 16MW. Actually, with these turbines occupying four times the area, the yield per ‘cubic metre of wind’ is less. The turbines are now visible from all directions (including from much of Loyne and indeed from areas of the Lakes and Dales) and not just from the north and west. A proposal in 2009 for a further twenty turbines across the moor was entirely predictable (indeed, was predicted in the first edition of this book). These turbines were proposed for the area above the Claughton brickworks. However, showing a newly-discovered appreciation of the virtues of (the remainder of) Caton Moor, the proposal was rejected in 2010 by Lancaster City Council.

The aesthetic appeal of wind turbines is much debated but generally with the long-distance view in mind. What about the aesthetics on the spot? A position on Caton Moor above Moorcock Hall gives the finest view there is of the middle stretches of the Lune, with the Lakeland hills behind. It also provides the longest possible view of the Lune valley, from the Lune Gorge to the estuary – but now the latter must be viewed through the blades of the wind turbines.

significance of Tarn Brook. Yes, it is the first ‘brook’, rather than ‘beck’, that we have met, a transition in nomenclature that is complete about 20km further south. This is not just a terminological curiosity but also an indication of the scope of Viking influence, consistent with the disappearance of ‘fell’, ‘force’ (waterfall), ‘garth’ (yard), ‘gill’ (ravine), ‘keld’ (spring), and ‘thwaite’ (meadow) across the Forest of Bowland. Indeed, the name of Bowland is probably derived from the Norse ‘bu’ for cattle rather than from the bow and arrow.

Modern housing for Lancaster commuters has now engulfed the old core of Brookhouse. There are three

halls within tottering distance of the Black Bull: the Hall, the Old Hall, and Old Hall Farm. The Old Hall was probably the ancient manor for the Caton estate, although the present building is of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The church of St Paul’s, where there has been a church since at least the 12<sup>th</sup> century, has helpfully retained something of its past in both major re-buildings. The 1537 re-building retained the 12<sup>th</sup> century arched doorway in the west wall, although it has been incongruously filled with a jumble of oddments, some of antiquity. In 1865 the church was again re-built (by the ubiquitous Paley) but this time retaining the 1537 tower.

Bull Beck continues past the A683 picnic site, which is a meeting point for bikers, to join the Lune.



*The Lune flowing towards Ingleborough*

### The Lune from Bull Beck ...

The steep banks of the Lune are pitted with holes. These are nests excavated by sand martins, which arrive back in England in April and can be seen in large numbers swirling and swooping over the river seeking flies before returning to their nest.

Below Bull Beck is the lowest ford of the Lune still in regular use. It is a little disconcerting to see tractors setting off into a river that seems too deep but they head boldly diagonally across to reach the farmer's land within the great meander.

The Lune continues its long curve to face whence it came and then turns sharply under Lawson's Wood to head towards a bridge painted grey, with red roses. On the side it says "Manchester Corporation Water Works 1892". Within the bridge is an aqueduct carrying up to 250 million litres of water every day from Thirlmere to Manchester. The Victorian style contrasts with the 1950s austerity of the Haweswater Aqueduct passed near Kirkby Lonsdale. The two aqueducts are now part of a

more complex system, collecting water from Ullswater and Windermere as well, being joined near Shap, and providing water to Liverpool, Blackpool and Lancaster as well as Manchester.

The Thirlmere Aqueduct is 150km long, the longest in England to work by gravity alone. As can be seen, the four pipes across the bridge drop several metres to be taken underground on the south side of the Lune. This is the sharpest drop along the whole length of the aqueduct (the average drop is just 30cm/km, and the water flows at 6km/hour) and hence the point under the greatest hydrodynamic pressure. The square buildings, south and on the hill north, have valves that can be closed to enable repairs. A £23m programme to inspect and repair the entire length of the aqueduct was begun in 2006, which is the first time that the aqueduct has been completely drained since it opened in 1894.

A few years ago, the platform across the aqueduct was opened to walkers, which was much appreciated, as also was the new bridge obviating the difficult ford across Artle Beck, 0.5km below the aqueduct.



*The Thirlmere Aqueduct (or Waterworks Bridge)*



*An alien black swan joins the Lune avifauna*

### Artle Beck

Artle Beck acquires its name somewhere between Crossgill and Potts Wood, by which point it has already absorbed innumerable becks flowing into the Littleedale valley. From the north, Crossgill Beck runs from the Caton wind turbines towards Roeburn Glade, built on the site of the old Brookhouse Brick Company, which closed down in the 1960s. Crossgill is probably named after the ancient cross, marked on old maps, that used to stand in the base that can be seen by a track (the old Littleedale Road) to the north. It is an old farming hamlet: one building bears a date of 1681. In 1780 a corn mill was listed here – by 1850 it was a bobbin mill, and it closed in 1945 as a sawmill.

From the south, Foxdale Beck and Udale Beck drain Blanch Fell and Black Fell below Ward's Stone (561m), the highest point in the Forest of Bowland. Ward's Stone naturally affords a fine view of the extensive plateaux of southern Bowland, although the flat top prevents views into the valleys. On the top, erosion has exposed gritstone boulders, some with fanciful names, such as the Queen's Chair. A few raised islands of peat remain but generally



*A CRoW welcome sign*

the surface is stony. After dry weather, it is dusty and the gritstone sparkles in the sunlight but usually the sombre colours intensify the wild, windswept remoteness.

The upland moors provide a breeding habitat for birds such as curlew, snipe, redshank, ring ouzel, merlin, golden plover, peregrine falcon, and hen harrier. The last is the symbol of Bowland. The hen harrier is one of England's most threatened birds and Bowland is its most important breeding site in England. In 2005 fifteen pairs nested in Bowland, more than in the rest of England. Unsurprisingly, the Bowland Fells are a Special Protection Area under the European Union's Wild Birds Directive.

The Littleedale region is also a good one for observing the lapwing, a bird that is distinctive in all three main identifying characteristics: appearance (with a long crest), flight (an acrobatic tumble) and call (a 'pee-wit'). The lapwing is declining drastically in other parts of the country but in higher areas of Loyne where the sheep numbers are not too high, such as Littleedale, there has been an increase.

The Black Side of Ward's Stone is rough country that until recently was reserved for grouse and grouse shooting. The British record bag of 2929 grouse was made in Littleedale and Abbeystead on August 12<sup>th</sup> 1915. The fine body of gentlemen (including four military officers not distracted by the war on at the time) responsible for this superlative achievement deserve naming: Major the Hon. E. Beaumont, Capt. the Hon. H. Bridgeman, Major the Hon. J. Dawnay, Capt. the Hon. T. Fitzherbert, Mr. E. de C. Oakley, the Earl of Sefton, the Hon. H. Stonor, and the Hon. J. Ward.

Today, it is CRoW land, open to us all (except when the grouse-shooters decide to take priority, as they are allowed to do on 28 days a year). There's an access point from Littleedale by Sweet Beck above Belhill Farm and also a permissive path (not marked on OS maps) from near Deep Clough by Ragill Beck to Haylot Fell. Foxdale Beck below White Spout and Cocklett Scar is an attractive secluded spot. The best walking is to be found on the ridge that goes up to Gallows Hill, for this is mainly grass, in contrast to the heather, bogs and rocks found below Ward's Stone.



*The trig point and Ward's Stone*

Foxdale Beck passes Littledale Hall, which is not as old as it looks. It was built in the Gothic Revival period for the Reverend John Dodson, who had been Vicar of Cockerham from 1835 to 1849. It became a Christian retreat in 1988 and a rehabilitation centre in 2006. Near the Hall is Littledale Chapel, also built by the Rev. Dodson but now used as a barn.

It is sometimes worthwhile to pause and ask: Why? Why did the Rev. Dodson leave his flock at Cockerham to build a hall and chapel in Littledale? It was because of the Gorham Judgement, a significant event in the history of tension between church and state. A Mr Gorham had been rejected as a vicar by the church because he did not believe in its teachings on baptism but, after an appeal to the Privy Council, the church had been overruled. Many clergy strongly objected to a secular court overriding spiritual authority, including our Rev. Dodson, who set out to build a 'free church', as it says above the doorway.

From Fostal Bridge Artle Beck runs through a deep valley shaded by woodland, which is important for its over 160 species of moss and liverwort, and past the sites of coal mines at Hollinhead and Hawkshead that were active until the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. On the opposite bank is Stauvins Farm, which was the home of Harry Huddleston (1910-2005). He was the first Englishman to represent his country abroad at sheepdog trialling. Sheepdog triallers do not rank high on the nation's sporting pantheon but for a section of the Loynes



*Windblown trees in Close Hill Plantation below Ward's Stone*

community the magnificent name of Harry Huddleston was one to be revered. He competed into his eighties and when no longer able to walk operated from his car, which he positioned next to the pen gate to help guide the sheep. Nobody objected.

The beck emerges at Gresgarth Hall, the country home of the internationally renowned garden designer Lady Arabella Lennox-Boyd (oh, and Sir Mark Lennox-Boyd, former MP for Morecambe). As we would expect, the gardens of Gresgarth Hall are impressive indeed, having been transformed since 1978 from a gloomy, dank, tree-shaded area, engulfed by rhododendron and laurel, into a light, open parkland with terraced gardens, herbaceous borders, a new lake, a water garden, an orchard, a nuttery, and so on, with Artle Beck running through them.

The gardens are open several times each summer, usually in aid of the Conservative party, but don't let that put you off. Apart from the gardens, you will be able to view the hall itself, which was largely rebuilt in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Perhaps you will be able to detect the rough external masonry of the little that remains of the older 14<sup>th</sup> century hall.

The Gresgarth estate came into the ownership of the historic Curwen family in 1330 when John Curwen married Agnes de Caton. The Curwens owned extensive land in Cumberland and Galloway when the England-Scotland border was more fluid. It is believed that after the First War of Scottish Independence, which ended in 1328, John Curwen was granted the Gresgarth estate (and dear Agnes, heiresses at that time being wards of the crown) in compensation for losing his land in Galloway.

John Curwen would have been well aware of the threat from the Scottish, since Robert the Bruce had ransacked Lancaster in 1322, and turned whatever building then existed (thought to have been a rest home for monks) into a tower house. The Curwens owned the hall until the 17<sup>th</sup> century, since when it has passed through many hands, including the Girlingtons, whom we met as owners of Thurland Castle.

Below Gresgarth, Artle Beck is more sedate. In the beck, opposite Bridge End, a Roman milestone was found in 1803. It is usually said to be six foot high but it is actually rather bigger, as can be checked in the Lancaster City Museum. Its carvings indicate that it marked a point



*Littledale, looking up Udale Beck to Blanch Fell, with Ward's Stone on the horizon*



*Autumn mists over Artle Beck*

four Roman miles from Lancaster, which is indeed the straight-line distance to the Lancaster fort. It is therefore an important indication of the path, now lost but probably straight along this section, of the presumed road between the forts at Lancaster and Over Burrow.

Artle Beck runs past Caton, which the aforementioned Thos Johnson considered “about the least interesting of all the villages in the vale of the Lune.” Although Caton is a workaday place this characterisation is unfair because it doesn’t distinguish between the parish and the village. Caton is old enough to be mentioned in the Domesday Book but until relatively recently Caton referred to four distinct communities: Littledale, Caton Green, Brookhouse and Town End. The seat of the manor, the original Caton Hall, was at Caton Green and the parish church was at Brookhouse, which was, if

anywhere was, the centre of old Caton. Incidentally, the present Caton Hall was the last home of the renowned landscape architect, Thomas Mawson, who designed

#### **The Top 10 halls in Loyne**

1. Gresgarth Hall
2. Underley Hall
3. Whittington Hall
4. Middleton Hall
5. Leck Hall
6. Burrow Hall
7. Ingmire Hall
8. Killington Hall
9. Ashton Hall
10. Thurnham Hall

many of Lakeland's grand gardens and died here in 1933.

It was only from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century that Town End grew rapidly to become the industrial centre of Caton, after the building of five mills. Ball Lane Mill was burnt down in 1846; Rumble Row Mill and Forge Mill closed down in the 1930s; Willow Mill and Low Mill continued until the 1970s. The last three survive after conversion to small business units and residences. Low Mill is reputed to have been the oldest cotton mill in England, built in 1783 on the site of a corn mill that may have dated back to the 13<sup>th</sup> century. A millrace taken from Artle Beck at Gresgarth powered all the mills except Ball Lane. Its route across Artle Beck near Forge Mill and through Caton to Low Mill can still be traced. The millpond by Low Mill is now a fishery. As with all becks off the hills, the water supply was unreliable and Low Mill became one of the first to use steam power in 1819.

All this activity led the centre of gravity of Caton to move to Town End. This was confirmed by the

building of the turnpike road, the present A683, in 1812, bypassing the old road through Brookhouse and Caton Green, and by the arrival in 1850 of the railway, with Caton Station.

This history explains the relative dearth of old buildings in Caton. The oldest church is the Wesleyan Methodist one of 1837. Many of the house names reflect Caton's practical past: the Rock m Jock cottages are said to refer to the noise from the nearby Willow Mill; Farrer House (which is an old building, dated 1680) is the old blacksmith's; the Ship Inn is supposed to refer to the sailcloths produced at Willow Mill. Even the Fish Stones are concerned with trade – the three semi-circular slabs are where fish were sold in the Middle Ages. By the Fish Stones is a very old oak tree, so decrepit that fears that it is disobeying its preservation order prompted the High Sheriff of Lancashire to plant a successor oak tree in 2007.



*The Fish Stones and ye olde oake tree in Caton*