

PENDLE'S HIDDEN VALLEY PROJECT

Field Walk 22 Feb 2014

Alex Whitlock

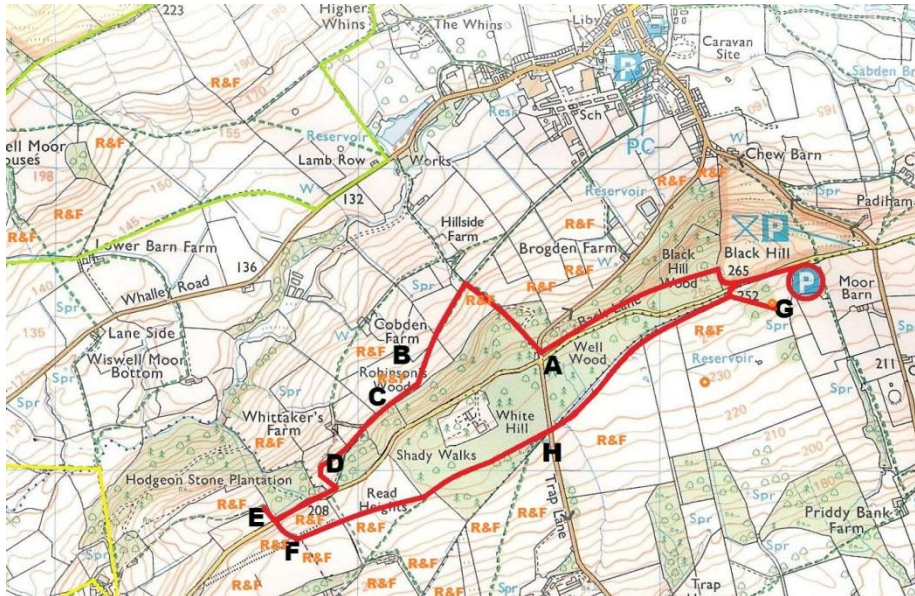


Fig 1 Route Taken (anticlockwise)

Initial meet/briefing was at the Heritage Centre. Those going on the field walk then adjourned and reconvened at the Black Hill view point car park (circled in Fig 1).

We then walked up to the trig point to get our bearings. There was some speculation on the purpose of a winding old roadway on the north slope below. It may be an early road up Black Hill or an access to something now lost. We then crossed the fence and walked through Black Hill Wood. The lack of foliage & recent felling gave good views across to the Nick of Pendle and the partially submerged Sabden vaccary.

Above Churn Clough Res is the site of a hamlet known as Craggs. An examination of that area is something for the near future, but it would be useful if we were to know its history prior to visiting the site. Between the trunks of the wood we were able to gain an impression of just how excellent the lines of site were from the hill. It seems almost inconceivable that there was no prehistoric activity on it. Unfortunately we are unlikely to ever know for sure as most of the hill has been the subject of quarrying. In the woods are many excavations for sand (from degraded sandstone) and stone that probably represent nearly a millennium of industry. A number of linear trenches probably result from extracting exposed beds of coal or a particularly useful gritstone.

Our path took us along the ridge in a south westerly direction. It was noted that the pressure of ice from glaciation had produced a particularly steep side to the U shaped valley. This in turn had exposed the underlying geology, leaving it ripe for early exploitation. We continued along the ridge until we reached the intersection with Simonstone Road (A) and the site of a gritstone quarry and Black Hill Cottage.

The quarry specialised in good quality stone used for lintels and other large objects. The bottom of the market served by this quarry must have dropped without warning, as the floor of the quarry resembles the Marie Celeste. There are distinct piles of stone grouped into different stages and types of dressing (*Photo 1*). It put me in mind of the abandoned moai of Easter Island. Just across the road are the ruins of Black Hill Cottage (*Photo 2*). The southern side of the site has been destroyed by a later change in line of the road. The area of woodland to the north and west of the cottage is known as Robinsons Wood, after an earlier name for the farm to its north (later known as Whittaker's Barn then Hillside). The wood's history includes a replanting that was part of a nineteenth century national tree planting competition. Once again there are extensive signs of mineral exploitation and also evidence of old track ways, possibly the original packhorse trail. After Roger had recovered from the excitement of seeing some bricks amongst some old fly tipping, we lunched on the lower slopes of the wood.

Déjeuner complete we walked north and onto the fields south of Hillside. In doing so we crossed what appeared to be a very old boundary. On the south of it was the forested and quarried hill, to the north our first encounter with the ridge and furrow (*Photo 3*) that encircled our entire route (see *Fig 1*). This first lot being quite wide enough to qualify as early by the standard rule of thumb.

The area between Hillside and Whittaker's (nee Greenwoods) Farm bears evidence of a complex history of changing field patterns, particularly at point **B**. If anyone wants to have a go at unpicking the fields and paleo channels in the valley, it would prove to be a valuable resource and a very useful skill. Examination of the molehills and erosion scars in this area revealed a high usage of industrial waste on the fields. This was common practice, the only real surprise being that the ridge and furrow between Hillside and Whittaker's was in such good condition. Of particular interest was a discovery made by Lynn G (**C**) on the edge of the old road that ran along the boundary between the fields and the wood. This discovery was two pieces of charcoal dug out of the ground by a truffling badger. One piece was oak (distinctive medullary rays) and the other probably hazel. This may warrant a closer look at this area.

Just south of Whittaker's Farm we diverted to look at a gritstone outcrop (**D**). This outcrop has been exploited in the past but what remains is largely untouched by human agency. Its position and outlook (*Photo 4*) make it a strong possibility for a Mesolithic site. I suspect the ground below has largely been lost, but there exists the potential for a small 'just in case' dig. From here we walked up to the road and then down to the site Tewit Hall (**E**).

Tewit Hall was still extant in the 1930s, though becoming ruinous. If you look at the 1st edition 1:10000 (*Fig 2*) and 1:2500 maps the hall is clearly shown. We diverted to look at the site so that we would have some idea of the features to look for when trying to spot evidence of lost buildings. The visit came as something of a salutary lesson. In spite of only being demolished within living memory, there site was almost devoid of evidence. There were a few stones in surrounding walls and rather scanty evidence of the platform on which the Hall once stood. If it wasn't so clearly marked on the old maps one would be forgiven for saying that the remaining features on the ground were natural.

From Tewit Hall we went back across the road and up a field of (diagonal to the slope) ridge & furrow to intersect with the feature described variously as a Roman road or ancient track (**F**). The initial attribution goes hand in hand with the description/assumption that Portfield was Roman fort. This has long been established as untrue & it is also now known that this old linear earthwork is a lot more interesting than that. Brian & Richard M gave us a trench side talk on this fascinating feature. It would appear that it is a medieval (possibly started even earlier) form of contour strip mining for a dipping bed of coal (*photo 5*). There are also a few minor faults in this area which may account for the feature I saw at (NGR) SD770 369 (*Photo 6*). It is possible that the coal bed has been pushed north as the result of geological activity. It may possibly be another bed of coal, or the remnants of some other form of mineral extraction.

From Read Heights we re-entered the Robinson's Wood (on the old maps, Shady Walks on more recent ones) and followed a very deep trench where coal was extracted in more recent times. This terminated in much bigger pit that has been used in comparatively modern times. Just to the south of this pit, we paused to look at a socketed stone (**H**). This is Simon's Cross, aka Wart Cross (*Photo7*), where tradition has it warts can be cured by dipping the affected area in the socket's resident puddle. The stone itself appears to be an old wayfaring cross socket, probably Tudor or later in date.

From here we contoured along the south of the ridge past Well Wood and more quarries. This took us back to the car park. Before returning to the cars, Paul, Richard M, & I, went to examine (**G**) one of two curious circular features that had aroused my curiosity on the aerial photos of the area. I thought they might be related to old storage tanks. The one we looked at is at SD783 365, the other at 782 362. On the way to it we looked at an interesting serpentine earthwork that extends from SD781 365 down to 782 364. Subsequent examination of the 1960s aerial photos reveals further circles at SD784 361 and 783 360. What these are is uncertain but I feel there must be some record of them. On the photos these features, and the wriggly bank, look very crisp, yet the circle we visited (*photo 8*) appears to be at least a hundred years old. This assumption is based on the age of the tree growing on the bank, the degree of silting in the outside ditch, and the spreading of the bank.

We then returned to the car park, crossing the original bed of the road as we did so. The blocking of this road leads me to speculate that this last group of enigmatic earthworks may be related to eighteenth or nineteenth century landscaping as a rural pleasance or garden. Some participants of the walk have posited other ideas, including enclosures for plants or animals, as explanations. I suspect when we do find out, it will seem blindingly obvious.

The walk has produced two possible dig sites (**C & D**), plus a number of things warranting further research (**B, F-H**). It has also highlighted the need to map the field successions and paleo channels in the valley.

Many thanks to everyone who has participated in the project so far, including all those who have been on the walks, contributed to research and discussion, with a special thanks to David T & Paul for helping organise and run it. Please feel free to add to the project in whichever way you feel able, all assistance is welcome, and required, if we are to make the Hidden Valley project succeed.

ALMW

NOTES

1 - The 1st edition 1:10000 (6") (*Fig 2*) and 1:2500 (25") maps were surveyed between 1844-1850 and 1884-1892 respectively

2 – Key to Map (*Fig 1*) attached (with route walked and annotations)

R&F - ridge and furrow

A - Black Hill Cottage & Quarry (*Photo 1 & 2*)

B - Ridge & Furrow in probable strip fields (mid to late medieval?) (*Photo 3*)

B&C - there are indications of quite a complex succession of fields in this area

C - Hazel & Oak charcoal in animal scraping on road edge

D - Part quarried but largely natural grit outcrop (*Photo 4*) - strong possible for meso site but I suspect ground below largely lost. Potential for a small just in case dig.

E - Site of Tewit Hall, extant until c1930 (*Fig 2*)

F - Medieval coal open cast (info c/o Brian & Richard) *Photo 5*)

G - Circular earthwork (see picture G) possibly Georgian - there is another nearby. The approx. locations are indicated by the bright red Os (*Photo 8*)

H - Simon's Cross aka Wart Cross (*Photo 7*)

IMAGES

(ALMW)



Photo 1



Photo 2



Photo 3



Photo 4

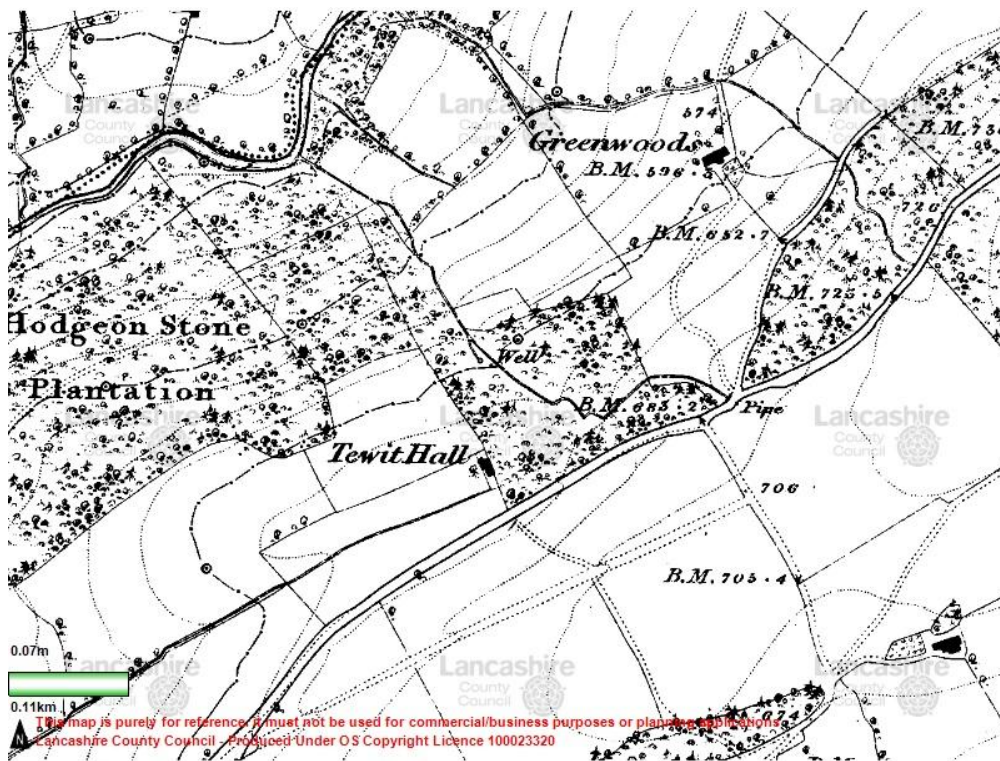


Fig 2



Photo 5



Photo 6



Photo 7



Photo 8

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