

HIDDEN VALLEY PROJECT

Field Walk 6 September 2014

Alex Whitlock



Map1

Our walk of 6 September 2014 commenced with a visit to the parish church of St Mary, Newchurch in Pendle. We looked at the display they had put on to celebrate their patronal festival. The idea was to say hello to some familiar faces, look at the display, and avoid the only period of rain forecast by the Met Office. Ah, mice & men....

Commencing the walk proper we donned emergency waterproofs to ward off a misty drizzle that still dampened the air. We didn't remove them for the rest of the day. On the plus side it was good weather for frogs, & quite a number were seen frolicking on the Heights.

Onto the walk. We turned right out of the church yard then up the public path to the north west and onto higher ground and joined the Pendle Way. The eminences in this area give good views and are comparatively well drained. There is even talk of a possible cairn site on the southern flank of one of them. This will be visited at a later date. Numerous small quarries litter the area, and in fact there was evidence of small to medium scale quarrying on the whole walk.

When we arrived at Fell Wood a unanimous decision was made to lunch early while we had shelter from the grey elements. Said grey elements, while eventually putting a bit of a dampener on the excursion, did lend a certain air as the harsher elements of recent history were largely blurred out(pic 1). Suitably refreshed we continued along Saddler's Height. A rather nice early ordnance mark was noted. We also discussed the likelihood of the whole northern edge to the Hidden Valley being used as an ancient route.

There is a practical logic to this speculation. The ridge has all the virtues of ridgeways elsewhere in the country – eg elevation, comparative ease of passage, easy navigation. It also goes somewhere

which cannot be claimed for the ridge that terminates at Pendle's Big End. It may be prehistoric, it was almost certainly used for access to the dole lands on the high ground, but it seems to have been long out of use by the nineteenth century. There is evidence of ridge & furrow & old field boundaries on aerial images but light conditions were such that we saw little sign of it on the ground. It would be a good idea to revisit in the winter with a raking light.

Moving onto Diver Height we saw an area of intense disruption of the ground. This is probably mostly post medieval quarrying but one feature looked very much like a large bell pit (**Pic 2**). Dating these features is problematic and it may well just another form of post med quarrying, but it is possible that it could be linked to the lead prospecting carried out near the Nick Of Pendle.

Further along Diver Height, and continuing to Cock Dole above Cock Clough, we encountered a series of enigmatic & seemingly multi period earthworks. Richard Matthews has speculated that these may be to mitigate damage by Pendle's occasional catastrophic 'bursts'. If this is the case, and we currently have no better theories, then they appear to have been built to protect the hanging valley roughly ENE from Cock Barn. The amount of work required would mean that this area was once of greater significance than it has been in many hundreds of years. The Cock Barn area is also worthy investigation, indications of its earlier history can be gained by comparing the aerial (**pic3**) with the Victorian maps (**map 2 & 3**).

Idris & I visited the area in 2009 and there were indications that the place had once been a habitation as well as a barn. There was also considerably more standing masonry (**pic 4**)& I took a group of photos that show most of the area serviced by the barn (**pic 5 - 8**). Sabden Fold to Black Hill can be seen in the background, a level of visibility not granted to us in 2014. **Pic 9** depicts the old gatepost we saw as it was in 2009. **Pics 10 & 11** show the old gateposts in the crossing of the clough as they were in 2009 & 2014 respectively.

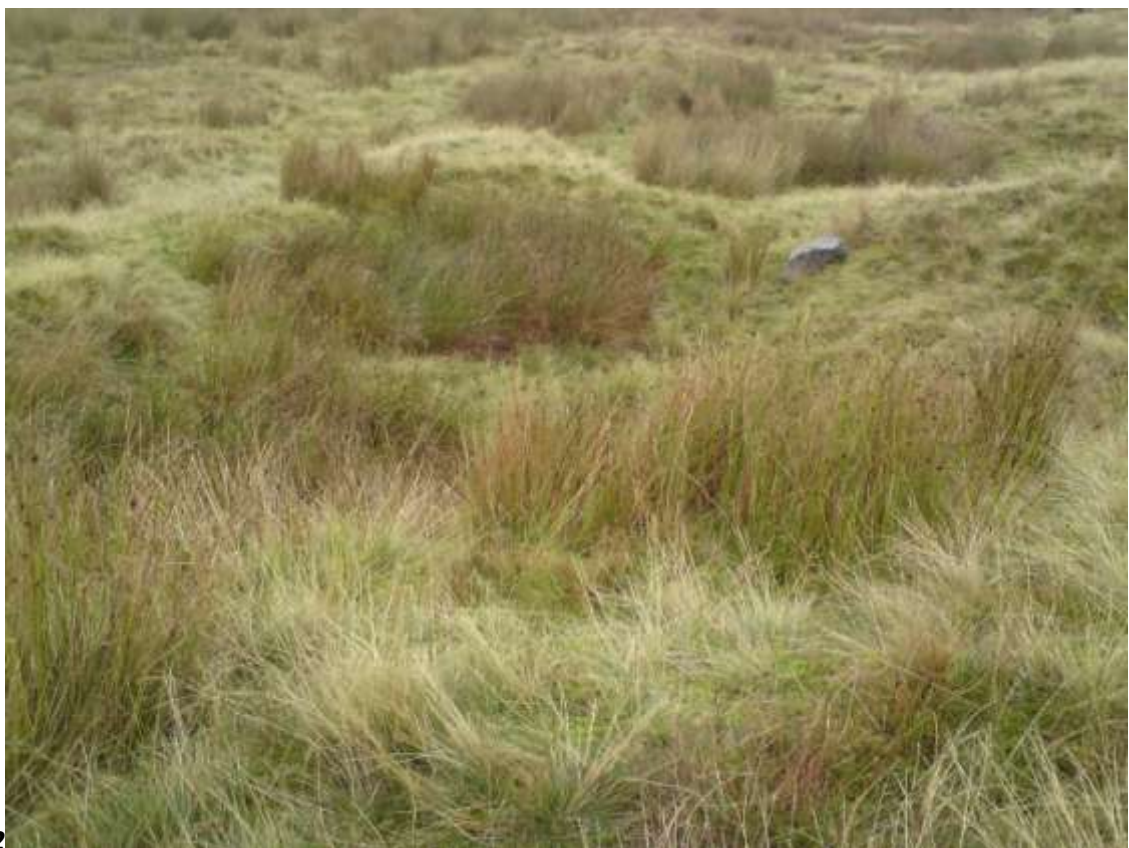
After Cock Barn the rather taxing weather had lost its novelty and got the better of us, in spite of only having walked about 1.5 miles, and our priority shifted to getting out of it. We walked down toward Sabden Fold along the edge of Cock Clough, observing what appeared to be more water management earthworks that had skirted the eastern edge of the Barn valley. It would seem that if these earthworks were safety valve in case of inundation then the priority was Cock Barn & not Sabden Fold. All rather confusing. Our haste meant we did not see the remains of a sunken track (possibly a ditch) that leads up to Cock Barn from the Fold. I took a number of pictures of it in 2009 (**pic 12**)& thought that its lower sections had been reused as a quarry access.

From Sabden Fold we walked, with minor deviations, past a sizable disused quarry and onto Well Head Road. The last mile went quite quickly but without incident as we couldn't see anything. Ironically we spent the driest part of the day sheltering in the church. Ho hum, the best laid plans of.....

Many thanks to the hardy few who were tricked by/braved the elements and for all they contributed on the walk. I think the more elevated sections of the walk will bear further investigation both in the field and through research.



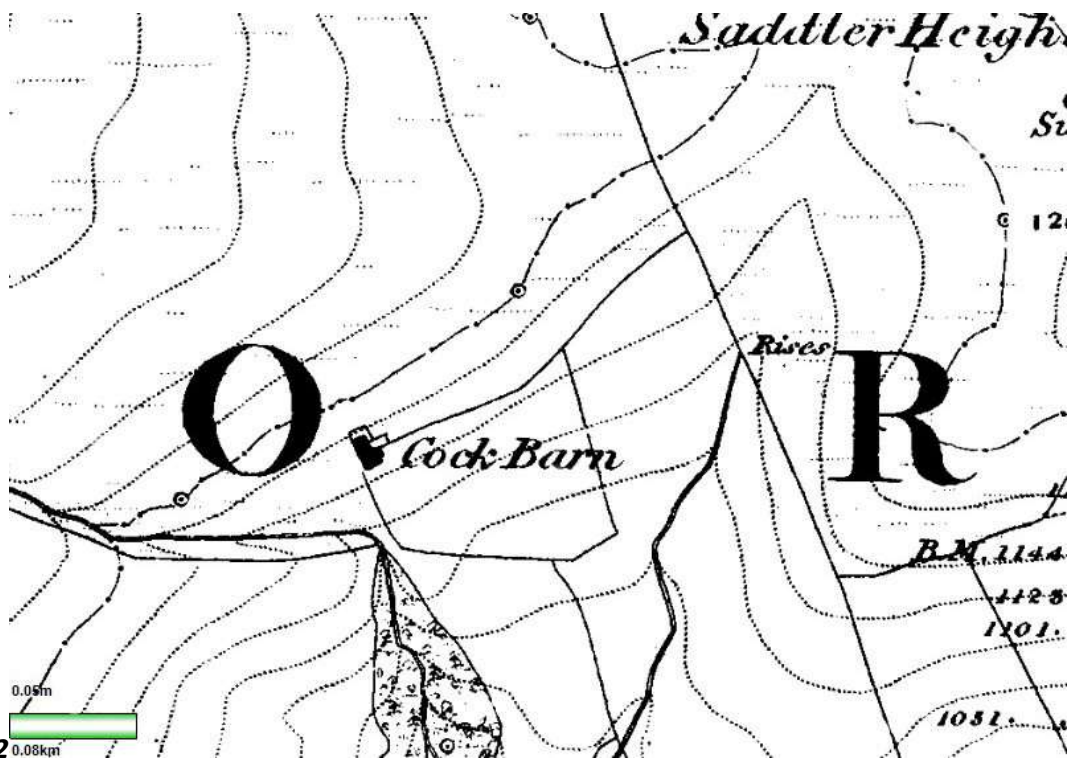
Pic 1



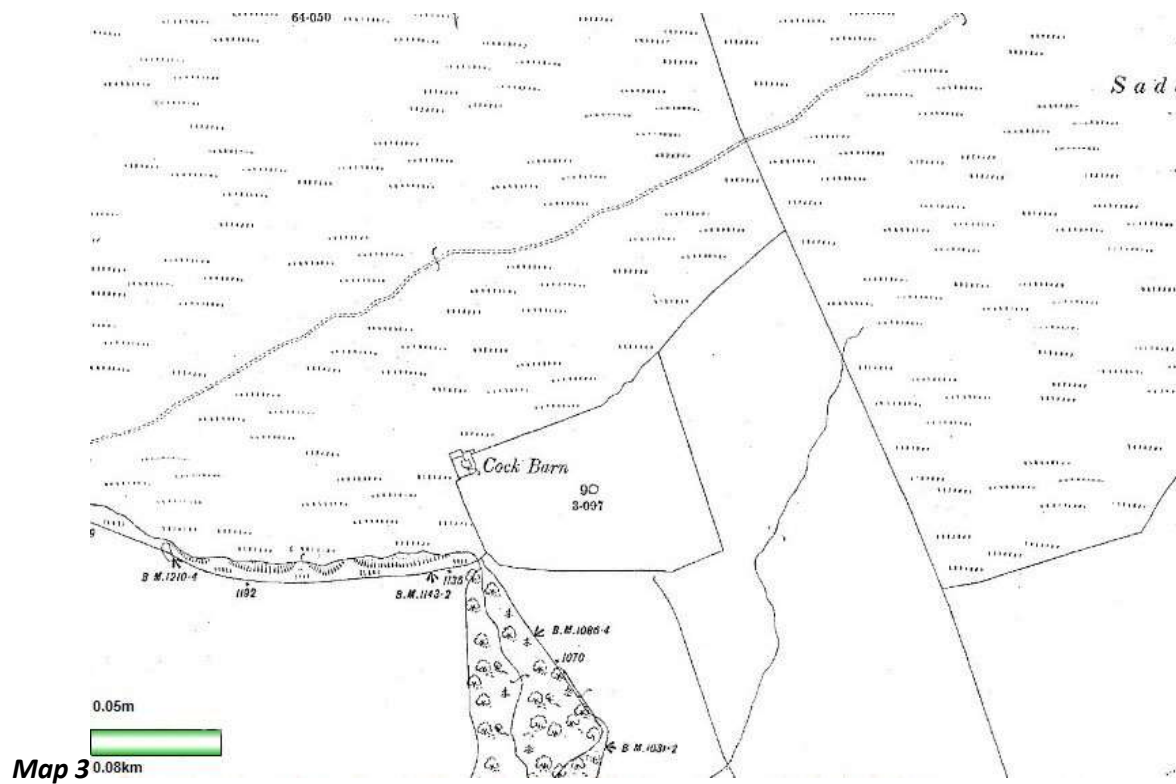
Pic 2



Pic 3



Map 2



Pic 4



Pic 5



Pic 6



Pic 7



Pic 8



Pic 9



Pic 10



Pic 11



Pic 12