# The Viking Trail from Lancaster to Dent

## And the History of the Hodgson Surname

Geoffrey M. Hodgson

**Martlet Books**

# The Viking Trail from Lancaster to Dent
## And the History of the Hodgson Surname

**Contents**

### Part 1: Basics

### Part 2: En Route

# The Viking Trail from Lancaster to Dent

## And the History of the Hodgson Surname

## Part 1: Basics

The walk described here follows the course of the Viking settlers who came up the valley of the River Lune - Lonsdale - in the ninth century. The route is of interest to the general reader and rambler. It passes through a beautiful area of north-west England that is rich in history.

The walk has been designed to minimise the use of main roads and use footpaths where possible. Boots or stout shoes, as well as rain gear, are advised. The whole walk can be completed in two or three days. It makes an ideal ramble for a long weekend.

The walker will visit several sites of interest from the Viking past. These correlate with areas where the Hodgson surname was - and still is - relatively common. In another work a Viking origin for that surname has been suggested (Hodgson, 1993). The study of the distribution and history of the Hodgson surname in the region casts more light on the Viking and Norman history of Lonsdale and Dent.

## Maps

The area of the trail is fully covered by two 1:50,000 (1.25 inches to the mile or 2cm to one km) Ordnance Survey maps in the 'Landranger' series: namely sheets 97 'Kendal and Morecambe' and 98 'Wensleydale and Wharfedale'.

However, the walker is strongly recommended to obtain Ordnance Survey maps with the 1:25,000 scale (2.5 inches to the mile or 4cm to one km). These contain more historical and other details and are more

suited for walkers. The required 1:25,000 maps are 'Pathfinder' numbers 628, 637 and 648, and 'Outdoor Leisure 2: Yorkshire Dales - Western Area'.

All these maps should be obtainable in book shops or in outdoor leisure stores in the City of Lancaster.

Figures with a format consisting of two capital letters followed by six numeric digits - such as SD 543632 - are grid references, and are readable from the Ordnance Survey maps using the one-kilometre grid squares.

## Guides

There are several good walking guides of this area. Two worthy of particular mention are *Walks in the Lune Valley* (Kendal: Stramongate Press, 1993) produced by the Lancaster Group of the Ramblers' Association, and *Walking Down the Lune* (Milnthorpe, Cumbria: Cicerone Press, 1992) by Robert Swain. In particular, extensive use of *Walks in the Lune Valley* has been made here in compiling detailed information about the first half of the route.

The Lancaster Group of the Ramblers' Association has helped to keep paths open, ensuring that gates and stiles are kept in good condition and that obstructions are removed. We are all indebted to them.

## The Route

|  | Miles | Km |
|---|---|---|
| Lancaster Railway Station | 0 | 0 |
| Halton Church | 3.0 | 4.8 |
| Caton and Brookhouse Church | 5.9 | 9.4 |
| Hornby Church | 11.5 | 18.3 |
| Newton | 15.8 | 25.3 |
| Whittington Church | 16.9 | 27.0 |
| Kirkby Lonsdale Church | 18.9 | 30.2 |
| Barbon Church | 23.3 | 37.3 |
| Dent Church | 29.5 | 47.2 |
| Dent Station | 34.2 | 54.7 |

# Possible Accommodation

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Victoria House, B&B | 35 West Road | Lancaster | Lancs LA1 5NU | 01524 732363 |
| Edenbreck House, B&B | Sunnyside Lane | Lancaster | Lancs LA1 5ED | 01524 32464 |
| Elsinore House, B&B | 76 Scotforth Road | Lancaster | Lancs LA1 4SF | 01524 65088 |
| Mrs Gardner, B&B | 50 West Road | Lancaster | Lancs LA1 5NU | 01524 67602 |
| Mrs Harrison, B&B | 19 St Oswald St | Lancaster | Lancs LA1 3AS | 01524 33861 |
| Lancaster Town Hse, B&B | 11 Newton Tce | Lancaster | Lancs LA1 3PB | 01524 65527 |
| Salt Oke South, B&B | Bay Horse | Lancaster | Lancs LA1 0HL | 01524 752313 |
| Shakespeare Hotel, B&B | 96 St Leonardgate | Lancaster | Lancs LA1 1NN | 01524 841041 |
| Farmers Arms Hotel | Penny Street | Lancaster | Lancs LA1 1XT | 01524 36368 |
| Greaves Hotel | Greaves Road | Lancaster | Lancs LA1 4UW | 01524 847533 |
| Royal Kings Arms | Market Street | Lancaster | Lancs LA1 1HP | 01524 32451 |
| Croskells Farm, B&B | Caton Road | Lancaster | Lancs LA2 9HG | 01524 65624 |
| Pedders Farmhouse, B&B | 97 High Road | Halton | Lancs LA2 6PS | 01524 811593 |
| Scarthwaite Country Hotel | Crook O'Lune | Caton | Lancs LA2 9HR | 015247 70267 |
| York Villa, B&B | 34 Hornby Road | Caton | Lancs LA2 9QS | 01524 770845 |
| Castle Hotel | Main Street | Hornby | Lancs LA2 8JT | 015242 212044 |
| Royal Oak Hotel | Main Street | Hornby | Lancs LA2 8JT | 015242 21228 |
| Barnfield Farm, B&B | | Tunstall | Lancs LA6 2QF | 015242 74284 |
| Dragon's Head, B&B | | Whittington | Lancs LA6 2NY | 015242 72383 |
| Royal Hotel | Market Square | Kirkby Lnsdale | Cumbria LA6 2AE | 015242 71217 |
| Church Style Corner, B&B | Market Square | Kirkby Lnsdale | Cumbria LA6 2AE | 015242 71431 |
| Copper Kettle, B&B | Market Square | Kirkby Lnsdale | Cumbria LA6 2AE | 015242 71714 |
| The Courtyard | Fairbank | Kirkby Lnsdale | Cumbria LA6 2AZ | 015242 71613 |
| Pheasant Inn | | Casterton | Cumbria LA6 2RX | 015242 71230 |
| Barbon Inn | | Barbon | Cumbria LA6 2LJ | 015242 76233 |
| Stone Close | Main Street | Dent | Cumbria LA10 5QL | 015396 25231 |
| Sun Inn | Main Street | Dent | Cumbria LA10 5QL | 015396 25208 |
| George and Dragon | Main Street | Dent | Cumbria LA10 5QL | 015396 25256 |

These details may change and should be checked. For further help with accommodation in Lancaster and the lower Lune Valley contact Lancaster Tourist Information Centre, 29 Castle Hill, Lancaster LA1 1YN. Telephone: 01524 32878.

# The Vikings

'Deliver us, O Lord, from the fury of the Norsemen!' wrote the Anglo-Saxon chronicler. The Vikings first appeared off the shores of Britain in 793AD. The Vikings were broadly of two types: the Norse from Norway and the Danes from Denmark.

The Norse colonisation of the British Isles was largely on the western side. They settled on the west coast of Scotland and after 839 in parts of Ireland. First they pillaged the rich Irish monasteries but eventually they built settlements and farmed the land. They founded the city of Dublin and intermarried with the Irish.

In contrast, many of the Danish travelled directly across the North Sea to the east coast of England. In 865 A 'Great Army' of Vikings, mainly of Danes but including some Norwegians, arrived on the coast of East Anglia, not simply to carry out summer coastal raids like their predecessors, but to establish a Scandinavian colony. In 866 the Danes rode north, crossed the Humber estuary, and took York. They thus settled in Yorkshire and Lincolnshire and over a wide area to the east of the Pennines.

Evidence about the Vikings now comes from six types of source:

1. Place names. This is one of the major sources of information about the patterns of Norse and Danish settlement.
2. Relics, principally stone crosses and tombs, weapons and coin hoards.
3. Sagas and other written sources.
4. Dialect studies (e.g. Ellis, 1985).
5. Genetic evidence (e.g. Horizon, 1994, p. 10).
6. Surname evidence (Hodgson, 1993).

Early studies of the Vikings used all of the first four types of evidence (e.g. Collingwood, 1908). Type five is very recent, and made possible by DNA-decoding technology. As far as the author is aware Hodgson (1993) is the only example of the use of surname evidence in this area.

# Some Scandinavian Place-Name Elements

| Word or Element | Meaning | Origin |
| --- | --- | --- |
| barrow | small hill | Old Norse or Old Danish |
| baugr | ring | Old Norse or Old Danish |
| beck | brook, stream | Old Norse or Old Danish |
| blea | blue | Old Norse or Old Danish |
| by | farm, homestead, hamlet | Old Norse or Old Danish |
| crag | rocky cliff | Old Norse or Old Danish |
| dale | valley | Old Norse or Old Danish |
| erg | sheiling or high pasture | Irish-Norse |
| fell | mountain, high grazing | Old Norse or Old Danish |
| garth | farmland enclosure, paddock, garden | Old Norse or Old Danish |
| gate | path, track, street | Old Norse or Old Danish |
| gill | ravine, deep cut | Old Norse |
| haugr, how | mound, hill, barrow | Old Norse or Old Danish |
| holm | land partly or wholly surrounded by water | Old Norse or Old Danish |
| keld | spring | Old Norse or Old Danish |
| kirk | church | Old Norse or Old Danish |
| knott | rocky hill | Old Norse or Old Danish |
| lang | long | Old Norse or Old Danish |
| lund | grove | Old Norse or Old Danish |
| odd | point, promontory | Old Norse or Old Danish |
| pike | mountain peak | Old Norse or Old Danish |
| rigg | ridge | Old Norse or Old Danish |
| saetr | cow pasture or high ground | Old Norse |
| saurr, saw | wet place | Old Norse or Old Danish |
| scale | hut, shack | Old Norse |
| scaw | sheiling | Old Norse |
| seath | pond | Old Norse or Old Danish |
| steinn, stain | stone, stony | Old Norse or Old Danish |
| tarn | small lake | Old Norse or Old Danish |
| thing | meeting place, court of justice | Old Norse or Old Danish |
| thorp | outlier farmstead of village | Old Danish |
| thwaite | clearing | Old Norse |
| wath | ford | Old Norse or Old Danish |
| yarl | earl | Old Norse or Old Danish |
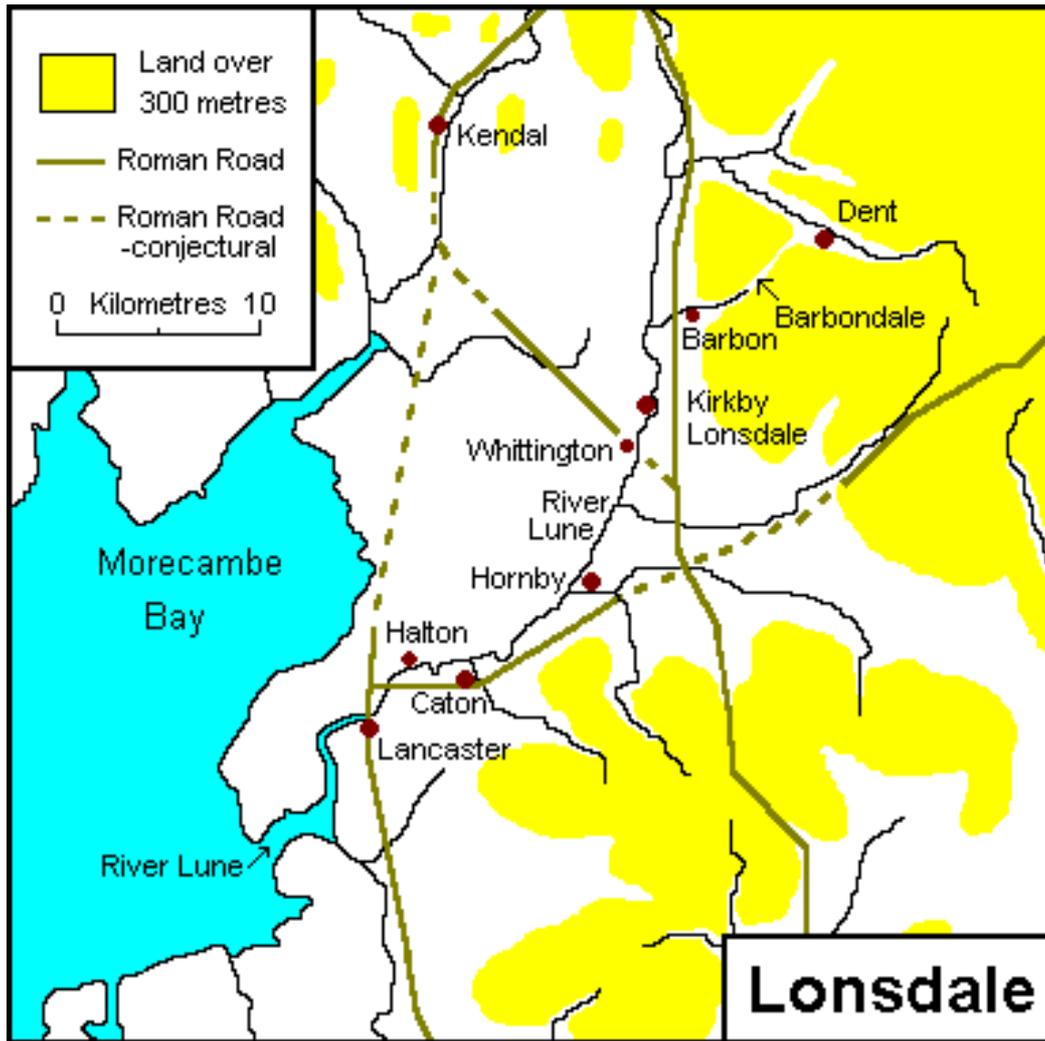
## The Norse Invasion

After their defeat in battle by Irish clans the Norse were temporarily forced out of Ireland in 902AD. They crossed the Irish Sea with their belongings and their livestock and settled at various points on the west coast of England. Some colonised West Cumbria. Others found their way up the River Lune in North Lancashire. In upper Lonsdale a dialect survives which still has some affinity to Norwegian. The Lonsdale Hodgson Trail follows the route of Norse migration up Lonsdale in the tenth century. It is a region where there is a high density of Hodgson surnames.

In his major essay on the Scandinavian settlement in Lancashire, F. T. Wainwright (1975) proposes that the Norse arrived 'in very great numbers' (p. 209). Their colonisation in this district 'assumed the force of a mass-migration' (p. 216). In line with most other modern scholars, Wainwright argues that 'Norse settlement in this area began soon after 900 and had gone far by 930 ... All the scraps of evidence suggest that the movement began and reached its climax between 900 and 910' (pp. 220-1).

Wainwright (1975, pp. 185-6) further asserts that the initial Norse settlement on the Lancashire coast was peaceful, and was in the first instance limited to the lowlands:

> It has been shown that the earliest Anglian settlers in this area preferred the rising ground between 100 feet and 500 feet above sea-level and deliberately avoided the marshy coastlands. The Norsemen settled most intensively in these low-lying lands, and it is highly probable that they found them scantily peopled and in some parts quite uninhabited when they took them over in the early years of the tenth century. The distribution of place-names therefore suggests that the Norse settlement was characterised not by dispossession but by a willingness to accept the less attractive districts which had been neglected by the English.

The Norse colonies in northern Lancashire covered the coastland of Furness, around Morecambe Bay and much of the low-lying promontory known as Amounderness. Amounderness, bounded by the River Ribble on the south and the southerly edge of Morecambe Bay on the north, 'also attracted many Norse settlers' (Wainwright, 1975, pp. 186).

As shown in the author's book *The Hodgson Surname*, the localities where the Hodgson surname is most frequent closely correspond to this Norse settlement. The thesis is that the surname derives from the Norse first name *Odd*, meaning 'point of weapon', or from derivatives and compounds such as *Oddr* and *Oddgeir*. Hodgson thus comes from some form of *Oddson*. Confirmation of this view comes from Henry Barber (1903) in his major work on British surnames. He notes that Hodgson may derive from the Old Norse *Oddgeir*-son, where *Oddgeir* means 'leader spear' (p. 207). He goes on to point out that an *Odesune* is

recorded in the *Domesday Book* (p. 168). The density of Hodgson families in the North of England in pre-industrial times is shown in the map below, taken from *The Hodgson Surname*.
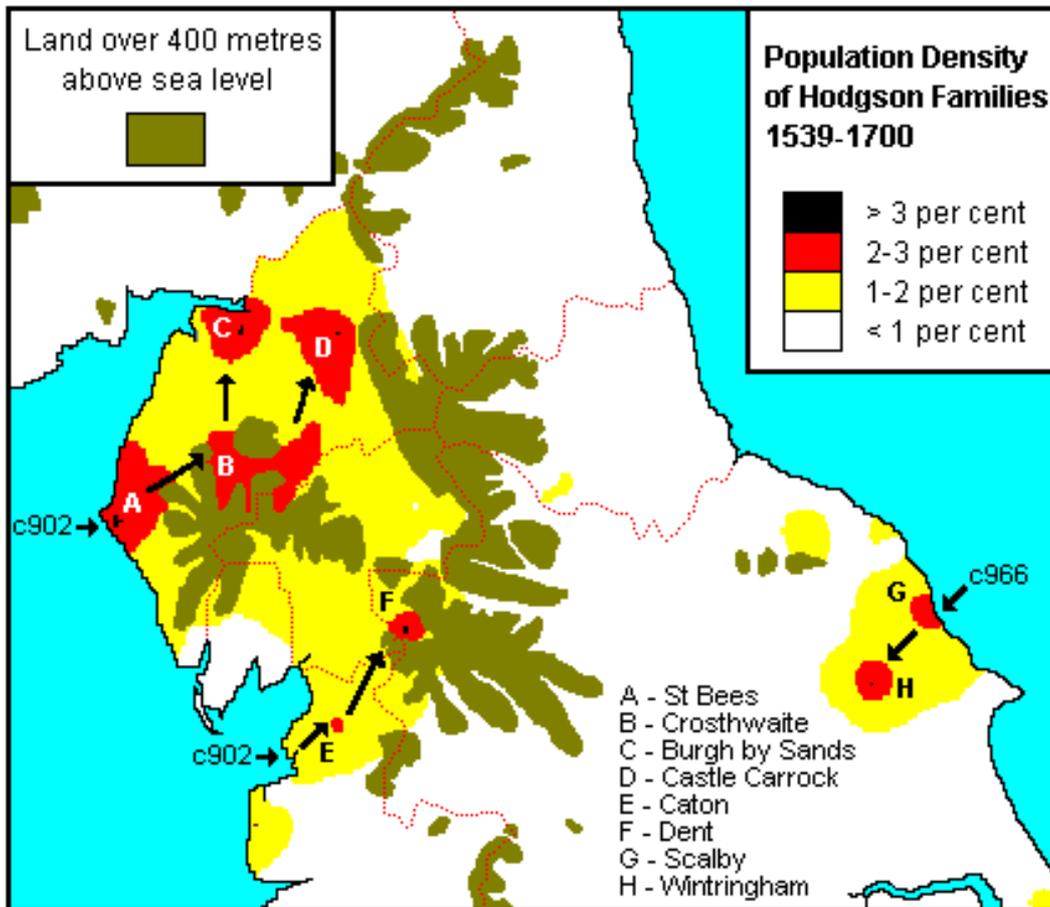


**Conjectural Settlement and Movement of the Oddson Clan, 900-1100**

It is suggested in *The Hodgson Surname* (p. 64) that well over half of all Hodgsons originate from West Cumbria and between a quarter and a third from Lonsdale. The remainder, about one-seventh of the whole, originate from the east coast of Yorkshire, near Scarborough.

# Part 2: En Route

Note that, for ease of use of this guide, route directions are boxed in by single lines, legends or historical accounts by double lines.

## Lancaster to Halton

English place-names ending in 'caster' or 'chester' usually denote a Roman encampment. The 'Lan' comes from the River Lune, whose course we shall follow. Indeed, Lancaster was founded by the Romans, who built a fort on Castle (or Weeping) Hill.

From Lancaster Castle the Lune estuary and the Irish Sea are clearly visible. This estuary would have been the route of entry of the Viking settlers into Lonsdale in the early tenth century. Fiery beacons may have been placed on Weeping Hill to guide them on their way. Our walking route does not start at the coast proper but from this viewpoint the whole of the lower part of the Lune river route can be surveyed.
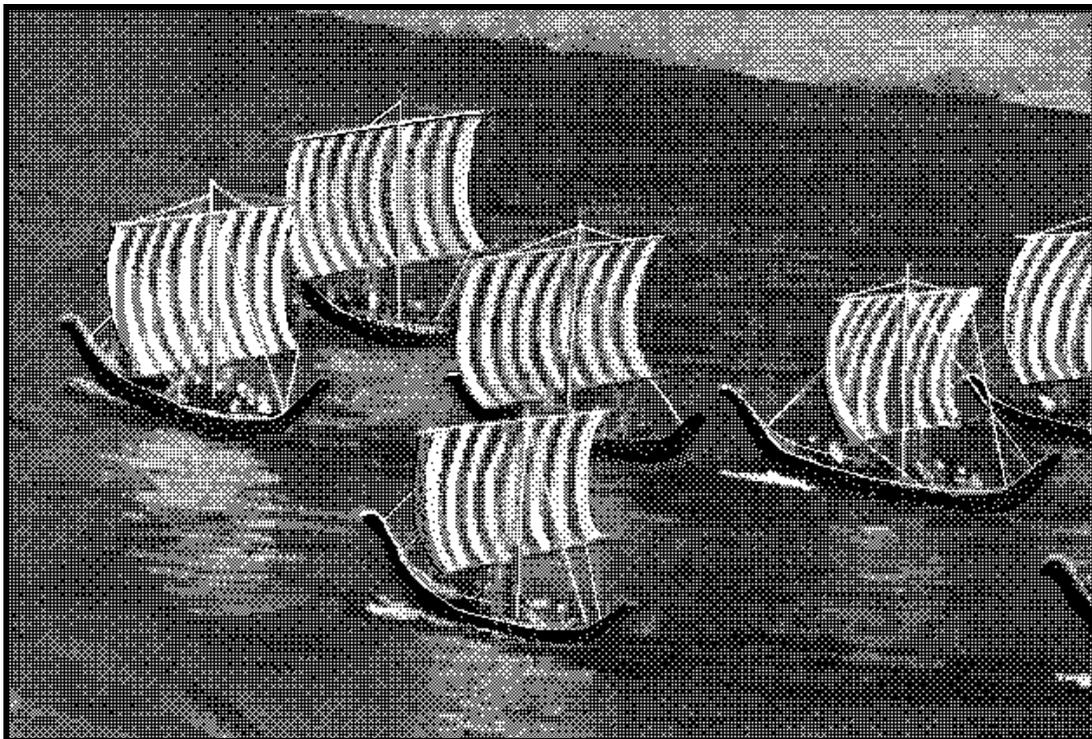
The surviving stone structure of Lancaster Castle was started by the Norman lord Roger de Poitou in the late eleventh century. The square and imposing Norman keep was built about 1170. It is 78 feet high with walls ten feet thick. In 1322 King Robert the Bruce of Scotland burnt most of the town but made no impression on the castle.

In 1612 the Pendle Witches were tried and hanged at Lancaster Castle.[1] In the Civil War the fortification was first held by the Royalists but then seized by Parliamentarians. George Fox, the founder of the Quaker Society of Friends was twice imprisoned there. Today it serves as a prison, but part is open to visitors. The Shire Hall within the castle has an impressive display of heraldry with the coats of arms of all English sovereigns from Richard I. Weeping Hill is the alternative name for Castle Hill and derives from the number of executions which took place there. The poet William Wordsworth wrote in his *Sonnet Suggested by the View of Lancaster Castle*:

> Why bears it then the name of 'Weeping Hill'?
> Thousands, as towards yon old Lancastrian Towers,
> A prison's crown, along this way they past
> For lingering durance or quick death with shame,
> From this bare eminence thereon have cast
> Their first look - blinded as tears fell in showers
> Shed on their chains: and hence that doleful name.

Next to the castle is the Priory and Parish Church of St Mary. Although there was an Anglo-Saxon church on the site, the present building dates from the fourteenth century.

Lancaster was an important port in the eighteenth century. It was England's chief port for trade with the Americas and much of its riches in that period were gained through the slave trade. As the River Lune silted up and Liverpool expanded, Lancaster's maritime trade declined. Many cotton mills were built in the nineteenth century.

---

[1]. This and other events in Lancaster in the early seventeenth century are depicted in the novel *The Greatest Treason* by Logan Thomas (Martlet Books, 1996).

From Lancaster railway station [0.0 miles] turn left at the east (town) side exit of the station and make your way towards the Castle keep upon Weeping Hill. After visiting this historic area walk eastwards towards the main street and the bus station. Take the main A6/A683 road north-eastwards out of town past a riverside park to the second, older bridge across the river. This is the Skerton Bridge, built in 1788; cross it and the River Lune. Arriving at the north bank, follow the path upstream through the park area known as the Ramparts. The path joins a road near where a weir is reached. Follow the road along the riverside for about 400 yards, past a scout hut. Turn right into a narrow pathway signposted to Halton with houses to the left. The path turns left to run between the houses and the river bank and leads to the Lune Aqueduct [1.6 miles].

The Lune Aqueduct was built in by John Rennie 1797 to carry the Kendal and Preston canal over the River Lune. The inscription 'To Public Prosperity' can be seen over the river with the additional words in Latin which translate as 'Old needs are served, far distant sites combined. Rivers by art to bring new wealth are joined.' If the bridge had been built 900 years earlier the Viking invaders would have appreciated these sentiments!

Drop down under the aqueduct and continue along the riverbank to the army camp. A right-of-way close to the river bank eventually bears left up to the road, just before the M6 motorway bridge [2.8 miles]. Turn right under the motorway and walk eastwards along the road to Halton.

## Halton

The Halton place-name is Anglo-Saxon in origin, signifying the existence of a settlement before the Vikings arrived. Indeed, there is earlier evidence of Roman colonisation and it has been suggested that they occupied Castle Hill above Halton church. When the Normans arrived they built there one of the many mottes and baileys that are

found in Lonsdale. From the top there are good views both up and down the valley. Clearly the site was of strategic significance.

It is known that in 1085, on the occasion of the last Danish invasion threat, William the Conqueror ordered coastal districts in North Lancashire to be laid waste. As further evidence of intensive military subjugation there is a relatively high number of Norman mottes in Lonsdale (Higham, 1991). The Norman nobility appropriated land from the preceding owners in the area in that period.

Halton Church is dedicated to St Wilfred and there is a legend that the church was actually founded by this saint, who was Bishop of Hexham in Northumbria and died in 709. There is a votive altar in the churchyard for the Roman soldiers stationed there when Halton was a port.

Also in the churchyard a tenth-century Viking cross gives evidence of the intense Norse settlement in the area. S. W. Partington (1909, p. 121) notes that: 'In 1635 the upper part was removed by the rector, in order that the portion remaining might be converted into a sundial.' Although the cross has thus suffered some damage, much of its artwork is still visible. On the side of the cross is a depiction of the Norse legend of *Sigurd* and how he slew the dragon *Fáfnir*. As Magnus Magnusson (1976, pp. 118-24) elaborates, the *Sigurd* legend is illustrative of the ideas of kinship, loyalty, honour, vengeance and fate that pervaded Viking society.

## The Legend of Sigurd

According to the legend, a dwarf named Andvari kept a hoard of gold, including a ring, in a river. Events led him to lay a curse on anyone who wore the ring.

The treasure came into the possession of Hreidmarr, the father of Fáfnir and Regin. The brothers made a pact to kill their father and seize the gold and the ring of Andvari. Regin did the bloody deed and said: 'And now let us share the treasure between us in equal portions'. But Fáfnir broke their pact and blamed Regin for the death of their father.

Fáfnir drove Regin away, placed the gold in a cave and changed himself into a dragon to guard it.

Some time later Regin found a young hero to exact vengeance. The hero was Sigurd, the son of Sigmund. The god Odin had given a magic sword to Sigmund. This weapon had been shattered in a battle in which Sigmund had been killed. But the broken pieces of the sword had been kept and from them Regin made a new and very sharp weapon for Sigurd.

Sigurd recruited an army, sailed across the sea and defeated in battle the people that had killed his father. He then remembered his debt to Regin who had made his triumphant sword. Sigurd asked Regin to lead him to Fáfnir the dragon.

The beast was huge and Regin was fearful of it. He suggested that Sigurd should dig a pit in the dragon's pathway and, when it passed over, stab at the beast's heart from underneath. This plan was carried out and with his sword Sigurd stabbed the dragon. Before it died the great beast lashed out with its head and its tail and warned that a curse was upon the gold that was in the cave.

Regin came out of hiding and praised Sigurd for killing his brother. He asked that Sigurd should cut out and roast the dragon's heart. So that Regin should take all the guilt for Fáfnir's death he would eat the heart himself. Sigurd agreed.

While roasting the heart for Regin, Sigurd touched it to see if it was ready to eat. The hot juices burnt his finger and he put it quickly to his mouth. Thus tasting the beast's magical blood he straightway became able to understand the speech of birds and animals. From them he learned that Regin was planning treachery: to kill Sigurd and steal the gold. Angered by this revelation, Sigurd beheaded Regin and took the gold for himself. Hreidmarr, Fáfnir and now Regin had now died according to Andvari' curse.

From the birds Sigurd also learned of the beautiful Brynhild in the land of Hindfell. Sigurd rode his horse to this country and came to a wall of fire encircling a hall made of shields. He spurred his mount to leap through the flames. There in the middle of the hall he found a lovely maiden, sleeping peacefully and clad in golden armour. He bent

down to kiss her and saw a thorn sticking in her flesh. He pulled out the thorn and the maiden awoke. It was Brynhild. She gave Sigurd a cup of wine and they became lovers. Sigurd placed a ring on Brynhild's finger. But it was Andvari's ring and unwittingly she became cursed from that moment.

Brynhild asked Sigurd to gain a kingdom where she could become queen. Sigurd rode off and came to the land of King Gjuki. There he befriended the King's sons Gunnar and Högni. Their sister, the beautiful Gudrun, loved Sigurd from the moment she saw him. But Sigurd had no mind for Gudrun and instead thought and talked of his beloved Brynhild.

Gudrun's mother, the witch Queen Grimhild, made a magic drink and gave it to Sigurd. As intended, the drink made Sigurd forget Brynhild. Time passed and he eventually fell in love with and married the King's beautiful daughter.

Several years passed and Grimhild decided that her eldest son Gunnar must win the love of Brynhild. Sigurd accompanied the two princes Gunnar and Högni to Hindfell where Brynhild still dwelt in the hall surrounded by flames. She had waited five years for Sigurd's return.

Gunnar's frightened horse refused to go through the fire. Still remembering nothing of Brynhild, Sigurd disguised himself as Gunnar, reached Brynhild and lay chastely with her all night, with his sword placed between them. In the morning Sigurd gave Brynhild a ring and she gave him back her ring in exchange. Thus Sigurd unknowingly placed Andvari's ring on his own finger. After Sigurd had returned to Gunnar and removed his disguise the flames died down. Brynhild was then able to come out of the hall and she returned with Gunnar to the hall of Gjuki. There she and Gunnar were married. Sigurd gave the ring as a present to Gudrun his wife.

Fatefully, during the wedding feast the magic of Grimhald's brew wore off and Sigurd began to remember all that had happened to him long ago. He then knew that he still loved Brynhild above all women. But he did not reveal his true feelings either to Brynhild or to his wife Gudrun.

However, Brynhild and Gudrun quarrelled while washing their hair in a river. Gudrun declared that she has the better husband, for Sigurd had proved his worth by killing both Fáfnir and Regin. Brynhild retorted that Gunnar and not Sigurd was able to go through the flames to reach her. At this Gudrun laughed, promptly showing the ring given to Sigurd after the bridal night with Brynhild. Brynhild fell silent, realising that it was Sigurd and not Gunnar who had come through the flames to spend the night with her. Feeling cheated by Sigurd, she went home and eventually persuaded Gunnar and Högni to kill him. Reluctantly they agreed but asked another to do the deed. Sigurd was attacked at night. Mortally wounded, he died after killing his assassin with his sword.

At this point Brynhild was filled with grief. She committed suicide with Sigurd's own sword and was placed with Sigurd on the pyre upon his funeral ship. The flames consumed their bodies and Sigurd and Brynhild were welcomed by Odin in Valhalla. The brothers Gunnar and Högni took the hoard of gold and the curse of Andvari's ring remained with them.

*For a longer account of this Norse legend see **Myths of the Norsemen** by Roger Lancelyn Green (Penguin Books), chapter 10. The same legend is found in other versions in other Teutonic cultures. The most famous is in which Sigurd is known as Siegfried and Brynhild as Brünnhilde, as depicted in Wagner's opera-cycle 'The Ring'.*

To the north of Halton, upon Halton Moor, a hoard of 860 Viking coins and other items within a silver cup was discovered in 1815. Most of these coins were from the time of Canute, the Danish king who ruled over the whole of England from 1016 to 1035 (Partington, 1909, pp. 177-8). This implies that the hoard was hidden some time after 1016. The turbulent events in this region from 1042 to 1085 (discussed on pages 25-27 below) would have provided many incentives to hide such wealth.

# Halton to Hornby

From Halton Church [3.0 miles] keep right where the road forks. Go down the Low Road and then after the Greyhound Hotel turn sharp right down Station Road towards the river. A narrow bridge is reached. This was built to link the village with the railway station that was on the south bank. Cross the bridge and after arriving at the south bank of the river and the old railway station, turn left along the path that follows the old railway line, signposted as the 'Lune Riverside Walk'. However, when the railway track departs from the river, keep to the river bank until the first old railway bridge across the river at Crook O'Lune [4.4 miles].

Crook o' Lune takes its name from the winding course of the river. The scene, viewed upstream from the hill on the south bank, was painted by the esteemed artist J. M. W. Turner.[2] In the Spring the area is covered with bluebells. The famous poet Thomas Gray described the panorama in his best-selling *Guide to the Lakes*:

> Here Ingleborough, behind a variety of lesser mountains, makes a background of the prospect. On either hand rises a sloping hill; the left clothed with thick woods, the right with variegated rock and herbage: between them, in the richest of valleys, the Lune serpents for many a mile, and comes forth, ample and clear, through a well-wooded and richly pastured foreground. Every feature, which constitutes a perfect landscape, is here not only boldly marked, but also in the best position.

It was into this 'richest of valleys' that the Viking settlers arrived after 902. Probably they brought their long ships up the Lune. Imagine their elation as they passed the narrow Crook o' Lune to find the wide and fertile pastures stretching many miles upstream.

---

[2]. Reproduced on the front cover, the painting is owned by the Courtauld Institute and a reproduction is published by Lancaster Tourism, White Cross, Lancaster.

Here they founded the village of Caton. The Caton place-name contains both Anglian and Norse elements. The '-ton' suffix is Anglian, but the prefix comes from the Norse personal name *Kati* (Ekwall, 1960, pp. 80, 90), meaning 'cheerful'. This may well be the case of the Anglian naming of a Norse settlement with *Kati* as its known or remembered chief.

Caton is less than five miles from the Morecambe Bay shoreline. Below Caton the Lune passes through a gap in the hills and then crosses salt marsh to the sea. Above Caton the Lune meanders through a fertile alluvial plain.

Reflecting the earlier predominance of the Norse name *Odd*, the Hodgson surname was very common in the middle ages. Parish records show that no less than 7 per cent of recorded marriages in Caton in the period from 1539 to 1700 were to a Hodgson male (Hodgson, 1993, p. 30).[3]

The commonness in the area of the Hodgson surname has made its mark on the local topography. There is a Hodgson's Wood close to Caton (grid reference: SD 543632).

Close to Caton is the originally water-driven Low Mill (SD 527649). It was erected in 1784 for the use one Thomas Hodgson and produced textiles. Included in the mill complex was an apprentice house, including dormitories to house orphans and other unwanted children. In 1808 children made up half the total labour force of 150. Relative to many of the contemporary employers, Hodgson treated his workers well. Although they had to work hard and for long hours, allegedly they were properly fed and looked after.

At Crook O' Lune cross the river by the first old railway bridge and follow the course of the railway track. This crosses the river again, obtaining the south bank. Low Mill can be seen ahead and to the left of

[3]. The recording of baptisms, marriages and burials was ordered by King Henry VIII in 1538. Many parish records date from that time, although the documentation is more complete in later centuries.

the old railway track. Follow the path along the course of the old railway to the edge of Caton. The path goes along behind the gardens of several houses before there is an opportunity to turn right and enter the village. Walk south a few yards to Caton Post Office [5.2 miles]. Cross the main A683 road and continue, bearing left towards Brookhouse.

The villages of Caton and Brookhouse are merged, and share a parish church. Adjacent to the Black Bull public house in Brookhouse, in the wall by the bridge spanning the Bull Beck, is a plague stone. Town people used to put money in the hole, which was filled with vinegar and water. In return, country dwellers would leave produce by the stone, and take away the money which was believed to be cleansed of plague.

Caton parish church is situated in Brookhouse. Dedicated to St Paul, has a tower dating from the fifteenth century but the remainder of the building is much more recent. Thomas Hodgson the mill owner left a plaque surmounted by the Hodgson coat of arms inside the church. This coat of arms is reproduced below.
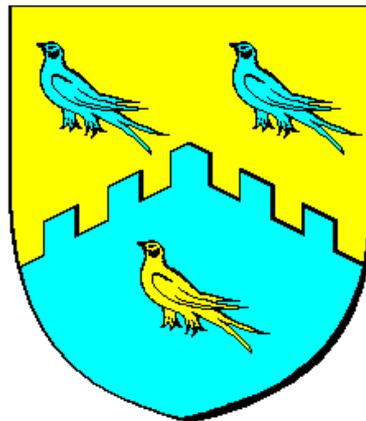


The technical description of this Hodgson coat of arms is 'per chevron, embattled or and azure, three martlets counterchanged'. This same coat of arms is associated with a sixteenth-century Thomas Hodgson of Dent who is noted in the Herald's Visitation to Lincolnshire of 1634 (British Museum, Harlean Manuscripts, no. 411), with the Hodgsons of Bascodyke in Cumberland (Hodgson, 1925) and with the Hodgsons of Hebburn, a prominent Catholic family residing on

Tyneside at the time of Elizabeth I (Surtees, 1820, pp. 77, 319). Do we find in the use of the martlet bird a later corruption of the favourite Viking symbol of a raven, used by them to depict the god Odin, war and death? A motto frequently although not universally associated with this coat of arms is 'Dread God'.

From Caton the established Norse settlers would have eventually been able to move northwards up Lonsdale and thenceforth to penetrate the dales of Westmorland and of the West Riding of Yorkshire. Wainwright (1975, pp. 188-9) argues that 'the Scandinavians in south Lonsdale were almost all Norsemen from Ireland.' They moved up Lonsdale and spread over the surrounding area. It has been suggested that 'the colonization of the hilly parts seems to be chiefly due to them' (Ekwall, 1922, p. 254).

It is probable that a Roman road ran from Lancaster up the Lune valley towards Kirkby Lonsdale. It would have joined the major Roman road from the south that penetrates upper Lonsdale and strikes north to Penrith and Carlisle. Much of the Norse diffusion into this area would have followed this route up the Lune Valley.

---

Caton parish church [5.9 miles] is situated near the road junction in the centre of Brookhouse, just past the Black Bull public house. After visiting the church return to the road junction and take the lane to the left by the Black Bull, signposted to Moorside. Turn left again into Moorside Road and follow it in a south-easterly direction. Follow it uphill past the primary school and the chapel on the left. At the top, at Moorside hamlet, there is a sharp right bend and the lane to the left is taken immediately after the speed limit derestriction sign. The lane heads uphill towards Moorgarth.

---

There are fine views to the west and north for two miles. Curlews and other birds are plentiful. To the west there is a clear view of the Lune estuary and the Solway firth. The highest point reached en route on Caton Moor is about 260 metres (867 ft) above sea level, but the best views to the west are obtained before this point is reached. Look back and imagine the Viking longships making their way up the Lune estuary

nearly eleven hundred years ago. This excellent vista is the rationale for taking this rewarding and relatively gentle uphill route.

Continuing along the lane upon the moor there is evidence of several old quarries. The track passes the ruins of Moorcock Hall [8.0 miles]. Just after the start of the descent an active shale quarry comes into sight, with bucket ropeways taking the shale down to the main road far below. Before the quarry entrance take the track to the left and cross the stream under the cables. On reaching two gates, take the one to the left. Continue downhill but keep to the right of Kirkby Gill Wood. At the end of the track continue straight on down the lane. Pass the facade of Claughton Hall on the left and few yards before the main road is reached turn right along the - unsignposted at the time of writing - uphill track to Farleton.

A diversion to the hamlet of Claughton (pronounced cluff-ton) and a rest at the Fenwick Arms Inn can be considered. Nearby is St Chad's church which contains a bell inscribed with the year 1296, alleged to be the oldest dated bell in England. A few yards down the lane beside the Fenwick Arms Inn there is a building with a plaque showing the high water mark during the disastrous floods of 1967.

On 8 August 1967 there was an exceptional cloudburst on the moors above Caton and Claughton. It has been estimated that in the centre of the downpour on Caton Moor about four inches of rain fell in forty-five minutes. Both the Bull Beck and the River Wenning burst their banks and many houses suffered severe damage.

There is an old moated site situated close to Camp House Farm. Excavations in the 1960s revealed that this is a medieval site of some importance, dating from sometime between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries. Evidence suggests that the buildings there may have been burned down during one of the Scottish raids of following the victory of King Robert the Bruce at the battle of Bannockburn in 1322. These punitive raids were attempts to bring the English to the negotiating table so that the freedom of Scotland and the sovereignty of Robert the Bruce would be recognised by treaty.

It has been suggested that Camp House Farm takes its name from the fact that Sir Edward Stanley mustered his men in a field close by prior to the battle of Flodden in 1513. Flodden is on the Scottish borders: the battle there was an English victory that devastated the Scottish nobility.

Pass through the hamlet of Farleton [9.9 miles] and walk down to the main A683 road. Walk north-eastwards along this main road in the direction of Hornby for about 300 yards. At the junction with the B6480, turn sharp left along a track. Follow this to Camp House Farm. At the farm bear right along a path in a northerly direction to the River Wenning, a tributary of the Lune. Although legally a right of way, the path is not always clear. Keep heading northwards until you reach the River Wenning. There the path turns eastwards and follows the bank of the river into the village of Hornby. On regaining the main road turn left into the village. Two hotels are on the left and the village church is on the right [11.5 miles].

## Hornby to Kirkby Lonsdale

The Hornby place-name is clearly Scandinavian, meaning 'Horni's farmstead'. Today over six hundred people live in the village. The parish church of St Margaret possesses a fine octagonal tower, built in 1514. Within the church tower is the fragment of an ancient and unique cross, known as the 'Loaves and Fishes Cross'. It depicts Christ, two fishes and five barley loaves at the feeding of the five thousand. It was discovered locally in the early nineteenth century. Probably it is Anglo-Saxon and just pre-dates the Viking invasion of Lonsdale in the tenth century. Indeed, it may have been hidden or lost because of that very pagan invasion.

The motte and bailey at Castle Stede is sited strategically close to the Lune and commands fine views both up and downstream. It is recognised as one of the finest motte and bailey fortifications in England. The site was first fortified by the Norse or by the Saxons. After the Norman conquest, Roger de Montbegon - who held the barony of

Hornby under Roger de Poitou - built a more substantial fortification on the same site covering more than two acres.

Later De Montbegon built a second castle closer to Hornby, on the hill overlooking the town. During the middle ages the estate passed through three other families: the de Burghs, the Nevilles and the Harringtons. Sir William Harrington was standard bearer to King Henry V at the battle of Agincourt (1415). A generation later father and son supported the Yorkists in the Wars of the Roses and were both killed at the battle of Wakefield (1460). A subsequent owner, Sir Edward Stanley (First Lord Monteagle, 1460-1523) distinguished himself at the battle of Flodden (1513). He returned to Hornby and ordered the building of the fine octagonal tower on the local parish Church of St Margaret to commemorate the victory. He appears in Sir Walter Scott's historical novel *Marmion*. During the Civil War in the seventeenth century the owner of Hornby Castle, the Catholic Sir Henry Parker, was on the Royalist side. The castle was attacked and captured by the Parliamentarian forces in 1643.

Continue northwards along the main street in Hornby. Just after leaving the village the road forks, with the main road continuing to the right. Take the road to the left towards Gressingham. Visit the motte and bailey at Castle Stede and cross the River Lune by the Loyn Bridge.

Loyn or Loyne are archaic forms of the name Lune. Loyne appears in the Lancaster city motto 'Luck to Loyne'.

After crossing the Loyne Bridge turn right onto the footpath across the meadow. Walk northwards through Thrush Gill Wood. The path follows the river upstream but is not always close to its bank. The towers of Storrs Hall (built in 1848) can be seen on the left. Shortly, the village of Arkholme comes into view. Head for the white house at the foot of the bank near the river. Keep the fence on your right until near the end where there is a stile. Cross it and pass in front of the two houses to another stile at the end of the road [13.7 miles].

The place-name Arkholme is of interest. 'Ark' is a corruption of 'erg': an element of Irish-Norse origin meaning sheiling or high pasture (Ekwall, 1960, p. 12). It thus gives evidence of the preceding Irish residence of the Scandinavian settlers of Lonsdale. There is a small but prominent Norman motte next to the chapel at Arkholme.

Just north of the railway and of the village of Arkholme is a small hill known as Yarlside (SD 583733). 'Yarl' is Norse for 'Earl'. Given its name, shape and location, could this be the site of a Viking *thing*-mount? The area is on the more fertile and south-facing side of the valley and is protected by the river from invasion from the south.

The Norse used assembly hills of this kind as local parliaments, where the free-born man old enough to bear arms would debate with the others and pass laws. 'It was his shout and clash of arms which gave validity to Thing-decisions' (Gwyn Jones, 1968, p. 346). All proceedings were committed to memory and handed on by word of mouth from generation to generation. It is possible that the was the nucleus of the Norse settlement in lower Lonsdale.

The *thing* was the sole legislative body of Viking society. It existed in various tiers and levels. These assemblies took place once or twice a year. As well as passing laws the *thing* acted as a legal tribunal. Until the creation of the centralised monarchies that were encouraged by Christianity, kings or chieftains in Viking society had no legislative power. The democratic *thing* was the sole legal authority.

Although the *thing* assembly excluded slaves and women, it is striking to consider the quality of democracy in Viking society in the tenth and early eleventh centuries.[4] All Viking parliaments in the area

---

[4]. It should be noted that Vikings - like the Anglo-Saxons and others - did sometimes keep or trade slaves. However, their society was considerably less hierarchic than the Anglo-Saxon or the Norman. The *Domesday Book* shows that the percentage of the population who were owned as slaves was much lower in areas of England populated by Scandinavian settlers than in predominantly Anglo-Saxon areas. In fact, the *Domesday Book* gives no record of slavery in Yorkshire (which at the time included Lonsdale) and Lincolnshire. In contrast, about 10 per cent of the whole population of England were slaves in the eleventh century. Outside the Danelaw the percentage is even greater, reaching over 20 per cent in

would have lost their powers and functions by the time of Earl Tostig (see pages 25-27 below) in the middle of the eleventh century. The people of Lonsdale did not enjoy similar democratic rights until the latter part of the nineteenth century, when the franchise was extended to the majority of male adults. Democratic institutions were extinguished for over eight hundred years.

Near Yarlside, by the river, are substantial earthworks, centred on SD 596735. These are remains of river embankments from a time earlier in the twentieth century, when it ran on a different and slightly more westerly course at this point.

Walk towards the village of Arkholme but after a few yards turn right past Chapel House and left past the Chapel and the motte onto the footpath. The path follows a wooded bank of the river and passes under the railway line before reaching Lower Broomfield Farm. Skirt along the right hand side of a wood and pass a long pond on your left, across which Higher Broomfield Farm is clearly visible. At the northern end of the pond follow the waymarked path across the field to the right. Eventually, after crossing a stream, the path bears left and follows the edge of the earthworks. Eventually a track is reached leading to the B6524 road linking Carnforth to Kirkby Lonsdale.

Walk along the B6524 road to the village of Newton [15.8 miles]. On approaching the village of Whittington it is possible to take a short cut on the footpath through the pleasant park land and woods to the left. Whittington Hall is to the left of this footpath. Rejoin the main road at Whittington Church [16.9 miles].

Significantly, Whittington was an important town in the early middle ages and the chief seat of a great lordship stretching all along Lonsdale from Halton in the south to Sedbergh in the north, and as far as Ingleton to the east. The Roman Road to Kendal from the south across the Forest of Bowland passes through Whittington. Before the Norman Conquest,

---

parts of the south-west (Partington, 1909, p. 104). Anglo-Saxon society was more stratified and less democratic than the Scandinavian, where the majority of males were freemen and women enjoyed relatively greater legal rights.

Earl Tostig - the brother of King Harold - held this seat and owned much of the land in Lonsdale. It is likely that this structure of estates would have been inherited from the Norse. If so, this is further evidence that the Arkholme-Whittington area was the nucleus of the Norse colony in Lonsdale.

The churchyard contains many Hodgson gravestones. A leaflet available within the church suggests that the mound just to the west of the church - surmounted by a sundial - is a Viking *thing* mount.

---

## Earl Tostig and the Norman Invasion

It is suggested that Tostig was probably born in the 1020s. His brother Harold became King of England. Tostig married the daughter of the Count of Flanders in 1051 and became Earl of Northumbria in 1055. The previous holder of this title was Siward the Dane, who came to England with King Canute. Canute, the Danish king who ruled over the whole of England from 1016 to 1035

Northumbria was formerly an independent kingdom covering much of what is now northern England. In 1016, King Canute the Dane brought all of England under one sovereign for the first time since the Romans, making Northumbria a province.

Danish rule of England lasted from 1016 to 1042. The English throne then passed to the Anglo-Saxon nobility. But in the north this rule was resented and resisted by the Scandinavian settlers.

The Lonsdale estates were linked with the Northumbrian Earldom. Tostig's appointment in 1055 coincides with the re-establishment of Anglo-Saxon hegemony in the Lune valley. In the 1050s the whole of the North of England was in a state of violent anarchy. The *Dictionary of National Biography* describes Tostig and his times in the following graphic terms: 'At the time of his appointment Northumbria was in a wild state, and men were forced to travel in parties of twenty or thirty to guard their lives and goods from the attacks of robbers. Tostig ruled with vigour and severity, and by punishing all robbers, even those of the

highest rank, with mutilation or death, brought the country into a state of complete order.'

Tostig was a ruthless warlord. He formed an alliance with King Malcolm III of Scotland and helped him to defeat Macbeth - the character immortalised in the famous play by William Shakespeare. In 1061 Tostig went on a pilgrimage to Rome. After paying due penance in the holy city, he helped his brother Harold to invade Wales in 1063.

Tostig's violent and tyrannical government in the north was highly unpopular. He taxed his subjects heavily. With popular support a group of nobles rose against him and he was deposed in the Northumbrian revolt of October 1065. Harold became King of England in January 1066 and he promptly banished his brother Tostig. The deposed Earl left for Flanders and offered to help Duke William of Normandy - who was to become William the Conqueror - invade England. It is also possible that Tostig forged his military alliance with King Harold of Norway at that time.

Months before William the Conqueror arrived, Tostig reappeared off the coast of England in 1066 with a many ships and a large army. He ravaged the south coast and briefly occupied Sandwich in Kent. His brother the king moved his forces against him, so Tostig retreated and moved on up the coast to Scotland where he landed and stayed for a while.

When King Harold of Norway and his army landed in England, Tostig moved south by land and joined his forces with those of the Norwegians in Yorkshire. He was killed at the battle of Stamford Bridge on 25 September 1066. The victor of this battle, his brother King Harold of England, was slain a few days later by the Normans at the famous conflict near Hastings.

It took several years for the Normans to gain military control of the North of England. Their rule in Lonsdale was not consolidated until the late 1080s. As noted above, William the Conqueror ordered coastal districts in North Lancashire to be laid waste in 1085, on the occasion of a Danish invasion threat. The Scandinavian settlers would have been regarded as potential allies of such invaders and would have thus

suffered from Norman fire and sword. The large number of mottes in the valley suggests that the area was subject to heavy military domination.

It likely that Lonsdale represented a group of integrated manorial estates, first founded by the Norse and then taken over by the Saxons. Many of the lesser lords in the area may have served Tostig, along with their vassals. After the Conquest, and with enduring Norse hostility and the memory of Tostig's Norwegian alliance fresh in their minds, the Normans appropriated and divided up the Lonsdale lands.

Prominent estates such the Whittington lordship were broken up into smaller units and granted to Norman lords. Part of the land became a Royal Forest. Much of the remainder was taken over by Roger de Poitou. Whittington gradually declined in importance and Kirkby Lonsdale became the principal town in the valley.

Lonsdale itself was divided between the (pre-1974) counties of Westmorland and Lancashire. Today, Westmorland is part of Cumbria and the administrative division of Lonsdale still survives: an enduring administrative mark of Norman determination to subjugate and divide the extensive and culturally integrated Lonsdale settlements.

---

At Whittington turn left, and then immediately right and northwards along Hostice Lane. Walk uphill for about a mile. Consider a short diversion along the track to Sellet Hall, with its attractive herb garden and cafe. Continue northwards along the lane. At the Home Farm Lodge take the right fork towards Kirkby Lonsdale. After passing through Low Biggins, cross the A65 main road, pass the school to the left and head straight for Kirkby Lonsdale church [18.9 miles].

# Kirkby Lonsdale

The place-name 'Kirkby' is obviously Scandinavian, meaning 'settlement with church'. Today, Kirkby Lonsdale is a charming and largely unspoilt market town. The Church of St Mary is a fine and relatively large building, signifying the wealth of this market town in medieval times. It is one of the oldest churches in Lonsdale. The earliest parts of the building, including the beautiful arch over the west door, are Norman and date from the twelfth century. Previously there was an Anglo-Saxon building on the site.

The great, great, great, great, great, great, great grandfather of the author of this booklet - one James Hodgson - was married in Kirkby Lonsdale church on 22 May 1690. His son migrated to Staindrop in County Durham.[5]

Signposted near the church is a short path to Ruskin's View, said by this famous writer to be 'one of the loveliest in England and therefore the world'. A plaque on the wall at Church Brow quotes from his monthly letter to 'the workmen and labourers of Great Britain' and marks the spot where John Ruskin's friend Turner painted yet another picture of the Lune.

The origin of the magnificent, three-arched Devil's Bridge is obscure but it has been argued that the present bridge dates from the thirteenth or fourteenth century. According to legend it was built by the Devil. It is one of the finest ancient bridges in England.

Kirkby Lonsdale is the model for the fictional town of Lowton in Charlotte Brontë's novel *Jane Eyre*.

---

[5]. This James Hodgson was possibly the grandson Christopher Hodgson, a priest involved in the 1586 Babington Plot. For a discussion of this legend see G. M. Hodgson, *A Hodgson Family* (Standon, 1982), p. 13. A slightly different story is suggested in Logan Thomas, *The Greatest Treason* (Martlet Books, 1996) where Christopher Hodgson adopts and brings back to England the illegitimate son of Charles Neville, the Earl of Westmorland. This adopted son could be the father or grandfather of the James Hodgson who married in Kirkby Lonsdale in 1690.
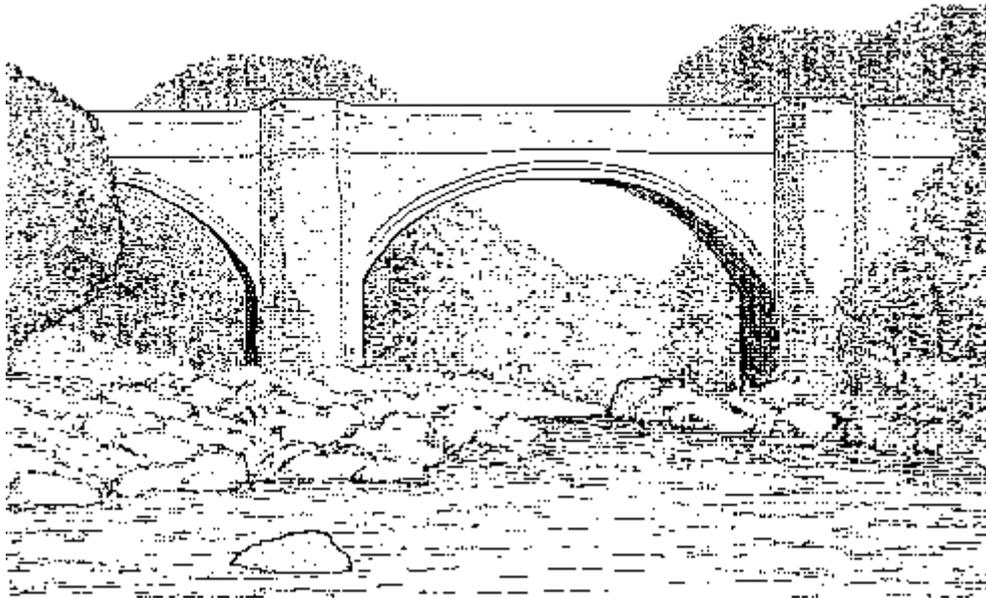
**The Devil's Bridge, Kirkby Lonsdale**

## Kirkby Lonsdale to Barbon

At Kirfit Hall (SD 617794) Henry VIII is said to have lodged while courting his sixth wife Katherine Parr of Kendal Castle.

From Kirkby Lonsdale church walk to the market square in the centre of the town. At the south-east corner of the square is a lane leading to the Devil's Bridge. Cross the bridge and turn left, heading in a northerly direction along the A683 road towards Casterton. On reaching the track which forks to the left to Kirfit Hall, carry on along the main road for about another 300 yards. Turn left at the footpath signposted to Lowfields Lane and head for Casterton Hall [20.1 miles].

Follow the waymarks directly through the courtyards and head for the woods on the north side. The path follows the edge of the wood, passes through a gate, and turns to the right. Close to Casterton School a track heading northwards through the woods with a gate and a bridge across the beck is reached. Go through the gate and take this route, eventually crossing a field.

Casterton School is descended from a school founded for the poorer daughters of Church of England clergy in 1823 and originally sited at Cowan Bridge, three miles to the south. In 1824-25 the four Brontë sisters were educated there. Charlotte paints a rather dismal fictional picture of this establishment, named as Lowood School in *Jane Eyre*. The school moved to its present site in Casterton in 1833.

Pass through the conifer plantation and skirt by Gildard Hill. Cross the fields by the footpath, aiming at a point just west of Underley Grange. Underley Hall School can be seen across the river to the left. Do not take the track which bears to the right towards Underley Grange. Pass an old oak tree and follow the path alongside a wire fence. On reaching Lowfields Lane, turn left, follow the lane, pass under an old bridge and arrive at Low Beckfoot [21.8 miles].

There is a theory that the novel *Wuthering Heights* is based on a real life love story occurring in and around the village of Dent. The close proximity to Dent of Cowan Bridge, where the Brontë sisters were educated, lends credence to this theory.

Standing roughly one mile north of Casterton, close to the course of the old Roman road, is an ancient stone cross. It is argued that this was originally a pagan stone to which the sign of a cross was later added. It may have been used as a preaching stone by early Christians.

At Low Beckfoot there was once a corn mill. There is an old packhorse bridge at High Beckfoot, near Barbon. It is only 2 feet 6 inches wide. The packhorse route came from Dent, through Barbon and westwards to cross the Lune at Underley Scar Ford.

From Low Beckfoot continue northwards and cross the Barbon Beck by means of the ford or the old packhorse bridge. A the farm know as High Beckfoot - or simply Beckfoot - turn right towards Hodge Bridge follow the course of the Barbon Beck upstream through the golf course and towards Barbon. At the A683 main road turn right and cross the Barbon Beck by the Hodge Bridge.

The Hodge bridge was built at the point at which the Roman Road crosses the Barbon Beck. It thus marks a very old crossing point over the stream. One may merely conjecture if its name has anything to do with the Norse name *Odd* or the Hodgson surname.

---

Immediately turn left and follow along the lane to Barbon village and its church [23.3 miles]. The taking of refreshment at the Barbon Inn will be a temptation.

---

## The Norse Migration from Lonsdale to Dent

The skyline to the east of Kirkby Lonsdale is dominated by high moorland rising to over 800 metres above sea level. From Lonsdale this massif appears as a hostile plateau, walled on its west by steep fells. But on closer inspection there are gaps in this wall. Just north of Kirkby Lonsdale there is the confluence of the Barkin Beck - a small tributary - and the River Lune. Upstream, the Barkin Beck cuts through the moorland at Barbondale. (See map on page 6 above.) From here some Norse travellers originating from the Lancashire coast may have entered steep-sided Barbondale through a narrow gap in the hills and followed the Barkin Beck to its head. From the watershed at the head of this dale it is a short step into Dentdale and less than two miles to the village of Dent.

Place-name evidence suggests that Dent is an earlier, British settlement (Ekwall, 1960, p. 142). From a lowland route in any direction, it is only possible to enter Dentdale through narrow and relatively obscure gaps in the fells. Lying in narrow Dentdale, and surrounded in almost all directions by large tracts of moorland, it would have been an ideal and secluded refuge for a sizeable Norse population. Away from the main roads and strategic military routes, a Norse colony could have remained there, unmolested by hostile invaders and alongside the original British settlers.

Surname distribution evidence shows a relatively high population density of Hodgsons in Dent, of slightly over six per cent in the seventeenth century (Hodgson, 1993, p. 30). This is one of the major concentrations of the Hodgson surname in England. However, there are no adjoining concentrations immediately to the east or north of Dent. (See map on page 8 above.) The links are to Lonsdale and to the south and west. Hence Dent seems to represent a terminal Hodgson settlement from which there is no substantial onward migration, other than that which could be accounted for by piecemeal diffusion and local inter-marriage.

Even more significantly, the distributional evidence suggests substantial group migration up Lonsdale to Dent, at the expense of some evacuation of the former settlements nearer the Lancashire coast. The question is then raised why so many of the *Oddson* settlers made their way into Dentdale to leave a permanent high mark in the distribution of the Hodgson surname?

The answer is mere conjecture, but some responses can be offered. For instance, the main *Oddson* group that settled in Dent may have left Lonsdale and entered secluded Dentdale to avoid the Anglo-Saxon armies moving north and ravaging the Norse settlements in the period from 934 to 1000. Let us briefly consider this possibility.

We have noted that a Roman roads from the south passed through Lonsdale, connecting it with Penrith and Carlisle to the north. This would have been a possible route of advance or retreat for King Athelstan's expedition against the Cumberland Norse and Scots in 934, for the campaign mounted by his successor King Edmund in 945 and for the similar invasion by King Ethelred in 1000. From Lonsdale there were two major Roman routes to the south: from Kirkby Lonsdale through the Forest of Bowland and from Lancaster towards Preston. These routes connected Lonsdale with the regions of Anglo-Saxon domination. (See map on page 6 above.)

The main alternative route into Cumberland from the south and east of England was over Stainmore. Athelstan probably used Stainmore as a route of advance in the year 934 (Blair, 1977, p. 85), but the route of his retreat is less certain. The Roman road over Stainmore followed a route

roughly equivalent to that of the modern A66 highway, from Catterick in Yorkshire to Penrith in Cumbria.

Lying right on the track of the military advance, the arrival of hostile Anglo-Saxon armies in north Lancashire would have created panic in the dense Norse settlement in Lonsdale. It is possible that the migration to Dent was caused by such an incursion. We can date the initial Lonsdale settlement in Caton sometime from 902 to 920. According to the Anglo-Saxon invasion hypothesis, the migration to Dent would have then occurred from about 920 to 1000. Tucked away in remote Dentdale, the ravages of the Anglo-Saxon armies may have been avoided by these Norse refugees.

However, circumstantial evidence suggests that the exodus to Dentdale was later, and associated with the Norman subjugation of the area in the 1080s. Areas of Scandinavian settlement were regarded as potentially hostile by the Normans, partly because of the threats of invasion from Denmark. It was believed that the Scandinavian settlers would rise up in support of such an invasion. Documentary evidence indicates that for this reason Lonsdale was laid waste in 1085 and subjected to extensive military occupation. The movement of a major part of the *Oddson* clan to Dent could have been associated with the military devastation or loss of tenure of land in Lonsdale to the Norman conquerors.

Given all the available evidence, the movement of the *Oddson* clan to Dent seems more likely to be due to the Norman conquest of Lonsdale in the 1080s than to that by the Anglo-Saxons in the tenth century. This is because the Norman invasion was by far the largest and most destructive subjugation of the area. But there is no direct confirmation of this hypothesis or of any supposed movement of population into Dentdale. In conclusion, any one of these hostile invasions would explain one of the most isolated and extraordinary concentrations of the Hodgson surname in the North of England.[6]

---

[6]. For Norse settlers on the coast and with access to boats, it was sometimes possible to escape from such invasions by a retreat to the Isle of Man, which remained part of the Norse Kingdom of the Isles until the year 1266. This option

In the book *The Hodgson Surname* the population of Dent is estimated at roughly 110 families in the late tenth century. The seventeenth century Hodgson population density figure of six per cent suggests an even greater density in earlier times. To account for the medieval density of the Hodgson surname there must have been several males - but probably less than ten - with the *Odd* name in the Norse band that entered the area in the tenth or eleventh century.[7]

Another common surname in the area - and elsewhere in the North of England - is Atkinson. This surname means 'son of Adam's kin' (Cottle, 1978, p. 42). Could 'Adam's kin' be the name given by the Norse settlers to the original British inhabitants? Note that many British had been Christian for several centuries when the pagan Scandinavian settlers arrived in the tenth century. The Norse in the region converted to Christianity around the year 1000 but many of their Scandinavian mythological beliefs were retained.[8] Maintaining a non-Biblical view of their own beginnings, the Norse incomers would have enquired of the British as to their origins. The British would have reported their sincere Christian belief that they were descended from Adam in the Garden of Eden. The Norse may then have described the British as of 'Adam's kin'. The names 'Atkin' and 'Atkinson' would have then evolved. If this hypothesis is true, then Atkinson is an *alter ego* of the Hodgson surname - a name signifying British and Christian origins but one formed by, and

---

may have been available to the Viking nobility in the area of Copeland and St Bees Head, but not to many of the Viking farmers in middle and upper Lonsdale.

[7]. One of the relatively few Viking settlements that has been excavated is the remote moorland farmstead at Ribblehead (King, 1978), seven miles to the south-east of Dent. It is possible that settlers from Dent built the Ribblehead farm. However, it is more likely that the settlers came to the area along the Roman Road from Ingleton. In any case, given its even greater remoteness and location on poorer land, it is likely that Ribblehead was established after the original Norse migration to Dentdale.

[8]. A good illustration of this point is the famous and spectacular Gosforth Cross, in Gosforth, Cumbria. Carved by Viking settlers around 1000AD, its carvings depict Christ and Mary alongside pagan symbols and gods such as Odin.

owing its very existence to, contact with the semi-pagan Scandinavian settlers.

## Barbon to Dent

Pass through the village of Barbon, passing the church on your left. Head uphill and eastwards along the lane to Barbondale. For the first 1.5 miles a diversion along the parallel path through the woods is possible. Continue along this lane through the dale for about five miles, past its highest point at over 300 metres (985 feet) above sea level. After passing a small wood and a ruined stone building, turn right on to a track which crosses a beck. At High House, cross another beck at the gill and go on through the wood. Follow the waymarked path across the fields. The path continues, mostly downhill, and turns into a track leading to Mill Beck Farm. Go through the farmyard and along the path across the field to Dent [29.5 miles].

Lying deep in Dentdale - one of the smallest but loveliest dales in the Yorkshire Dales National Park - the town of Dent is an extremely attractive small town with narrow, cobbled streets and grey-stone and whitewashed cottages. In the centre of the town is a large slab of granite with a drinking fountain. This commemorates a famous nineteenth century local, Adam Sedgwick (1785-1873). Son of the local vicar, he became a friend of Robert Southey, Charles Darwin and Queen Victoria and was appointed Professor of Geology at the University of Cambridge, where a there is museum named after him.

At Dent there is an extraordinary concentration of Hodgsons. Parish records show that no less than 6.1 per cent of recorded marriages in Caton in the period from 1539 to 1700 were to a Hodgson male.

The town used to be famous for its cheese. Cheese-making is prominent in traditional Scandinavian farming and dairying skills may have been brought to Dentdale by the Norse. In later years marble was mined, and in the seventeenth century hand-knitted garments were

turned out at such a rate that the workers were known and feared by their competitors as 'the terrible knitters of Dent'.

The *Sunday People* newspaper of 21 October 1984 carried an interesting story. Mr Garnett Wood was researching into his family history and found that his ancestor, George Hodgson, was buried in 1715 at St Andrew's churchyard in Dent, at the place where a few paths meet. Some people from George Hodgson's family had the extremely rare double eye-teeth. Furthermore, the tip of a brass stake sticks out from his stone. This led to the fanciful and amusing conjecture - faithfully reported by the *Sunday People* - that George Hodgson was 'a vampire'! Of course, he wasn't, but it is interesting to know that the rare double eye teeth are still found in the Hodgson clan. The present author's first cousin once removed has eye teeth.

---

## Metcalfe - Yet Another Dent Surname

A surname originating in the Dent area is Metcalfe. According to an article in *The Dalesman* in January 1996 - reporting the view of the Metcalfe Surname Society - the name originates from the hill known as Calf Top, 3 miles SW of Dent and on the north side of Barbondale. In 1194 the Norman conquerors divided the moorland area into three parts allocating one William the central piece. He became known as William de Medecalfe. This name is thus of Norman rather than British or Norse origins. Atkinson, Hodgson and Metcalfe are thus associated with three successive waves of invasion in the Dent area.

---

## Dent Village to Dent Railway Station

Dentdale is very beautiful. An excellent way of viewing the dale, completing the walk and reaching public transport is to walk up to Dent railway station, about five miles from the village.

---

OPTIONAL EXTENSION OF THE ROUTE TO DENT STATION: From Dent Church take the lane out of the village towards Dent Railway Station. On reaching the River Dee at Church Bridge, remain on the

---

south bank of the river but turn right and upstream along the footpath known as the Dales Way (Gemmel and Speakman, 1991; Hanron, 1988). It is possible to continue to Dent Railway Station along a lane, but footpaths are generally a more attractive proposition. If you choose to use a lane then the one south of the river is no extra distance and is subject to much less traffic.

Continue westwards along the Dales Way for about three and a half miles. At this point the route follows a narrow lane past Ewegales Farm, for about half a mile. At Lea Yeat Bridge leave the Dales Way and head north across the bridge to Lea Yeat itself. Follow the road up the steep hill to Dent Railway Station [34.2 miles].

---

While waiting for one of the infrequent but thankfully still-running trains, congratulate yourself for walking 34.2 miles from Lancaster along the trail.

Dent Railway Station is on the famous and spectacular Settle to Carlisle line. The railway was opened in 1876 by the Midland Railway Company as its main line from London to Scotland, rivalling the Great Northern Railway's line along the east coast and the London and North Western Railway's route through Preston, Lancaster and Carlisle to the west. The Midland line was run down in the 1970s, leading to the closure of Dent and all other stations, except Settle and Appleby. In 1983 it was proposed to close down the line entirely. However, with the energetic support of ramblers and others, an entrepreneurial British Rail manager re-opened the smaller stations in 1986. Based on leisure activity - primarily walkers and tourists - passenger traffic grew. The line was reprieved from threat of closure in 1989 but with the privatisation of British Rail it once again faces uncertain times.

By using Dent station your are helping to keep it and the beautiful Settle to Carlisle railway line open.

# Register of Viking Trailblazers from Lancaster to Dent

A register is being kept of modern post-Vikings who have completed the trail and walked from Lancaster Railway Station to Dent Church, either in instalments or in one journey. To add your name to this register please write to Martlet Books, 'Bounty', Kents Lane, Standon, Near Ware, Hertfordshire SG11 1PJ, UK. Give the date of completion and the age of each trailblazer.

| Number | Name | Date Completed | Age at Time of Completion |
|--------|------|----------------|---------------------------|
| 1 | James Thomas Hodgson | 5 July 1994 | 9 |
| 2 | Peter Kenneth Hodgson | 5 July 1994 | 69 |
| 3 | Bruce George Hodgson | 5 July 1994 | 58 |
| 4 | Geoffrey Martin Hodgson | 5 July 1994 | 47 |

# Bibliography

Barber, Henry (1903) *British Family Names: Their Origin and Meaning*, second edition (London: Elliot Stock).

Collingwood, W. G. (1908) *Scandinavian Britain* (London). Facsimile reprint 1993 (Felinfach: Llanerch Publishers).

Cottle, Basil (1978) *The Penguin Dictionary of Surnames* (Harmondsworth: Penguin).

Ekwall, Eilert (1922) *The Place-Names of Lancashire* (Manchester: Manchester University Press).

Ekwall, Eilert (1960) *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Place-Names* (Oxford: Clarendon Press).

Ellis, Stanley (1985) 'Scandinavian Influences on Cumbrian Dialect, in Baldwin, John R. and Whyte, Ian D. (eds) (1985), *The Scandinavians in Cumbria* (Edinburgh: The Scottish Society for Northern Studies), pp. 161-7.

Gemmel, Arthur and Speakman, Colin (1991) *Dales Way Route Guide*, 5th edn. (Otley: Stile Publications).

Green, Roger Lancelyn (1970) *Myths of the Norsemen* (Harmondsworth: Penguin).

Hanron, Paul (1988) *Dales Way Companion* (Keighley: Hillside Publications).

Higham, Mary C. (1991) 'The Mottes of North Lancashire, Lonsdale and South Cumbria', *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society*, New Series, **91**, pp. 79-90.

Hodgson, Geoffrey M. (1993) *The Hodgson Surname: Its Norse Origin and Cumbrian Location* (Standon: Martlet Books).

Hodgson, James (1925) 'The Hodgsons of Bascodyke', *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society*, New Series, **25**, pp. 244-49.

Horizon (1994) *Sir Walter's Journey: Text Adapted from the Programme Transmitted 28 March 1994* (London: British Broadcasting Corporation).

Jones, Gwyn (1968) *A History of the Vikings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

King, A. (1979) 'Gauber High Pasture, Ribblehead - An Interim Report', in Hall, R. A. (ed.) (1979), *Viking Age York and the North* (Council for British Archaeology Research Report 27), pp. 21-5.

Lancaster Group of the Ramblers' Association (1993) *Walks in the Lune Valley* (Kendal: Stramongate Press).

Magnusson, Magnus (1976) *Hammer of the North: Myths and Heroes of the Viking Age* (London: Orbis).

Oxford University Press (1975) *The Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

Partington, S. W. (1909) *The Danes in Lancashire* (London: Sherratt and Hughes). Reprinted 1973 (Manchester: E. J. Morten).

Surtees, R. (1820) *History and Antiquities of the County Palatine of Durham*, volume 2 (London).

Swain, Robert (1992) *Walking Down the Lune* (Milnthorpe, Cumbria: Cicerone Press).

Wainwright, F. T. (1975) *Scandinavian England: Collected Papers*, ed. H. P. R. Finberg (Chichester: Phillimore).

# A Quiz for Children

1.  What river gives its name to, and is miss-spelt 'Lan', in *Lan*caster?

2.  What does 'caster' mean in Lancaster?

3.  The name Lancaster signifies a settlement by which invaders?

4.  Name a town with a name ending in 'chester'

5,6. Think of two reasons why Lancaster castle was built on a hill.

7.  Who was Sigurd?

8.  Who were the Norse?

9.  Where did the Norse originally come from?

10. In which country did they settle before coming to Lonsdale?

11. Guess why the Crook o'Lune is so called.

12. Give a major reason why the Norse settled in the Caton area.

13. What does 'thwaite' mean in Norse?

14,15. Name two places with 'thwaite' in their name.

16. What does 'by' mean in Norse?

17,18. Name two places with 'by' in their name.

19.      What is a motte and bailey?

_____

_____

20.      Roughly, in what decades were they built?

_____

21.      Who built them?

_____

22.      Why were they built?

_____

_____

23.      Who was Earl Tostig?

_____

_____

_____

24.      How did Earl Tostig treat the Norse settlers in Lonsdale?

_____

_____

_____

25.      In what year was he killed?

_____

26.      Where was he killed?

_____

27.      What famous battle was fought a few days later?

_____

28.      What does 'kirk' mean in Norse?

_____

29,30.   Name two places with 'kirk' in their name.

_____

31.      How many arches has the Devil's Bridge?

_____

32.      Which famous sisters went to school in the Kirkby Lonsdale area?

_____

33.      Why do *you* think there have been so many Hodgsons in Dent?

_____

_____