



The old Norman chapel at Stydd.

Just south of here is the isolated Norman chapel that is thought to have been a hospital managed by the Knights Hospitaller of St John of Jerusalem. Many of the old herbs used for healing the sick can still be found in the vicinity. Unchanged over centuries, this ancient throwback to the beginning of the last millennium remains largely unknown to the majority of visitors to Ribchester.

Continue past the chapel to join a paved road serving the hamlet of Stydd. On your right are the almshouses built by the Shireburnes in 1726 and which still provide homes to Catholic ladies of the parish. The entrance pillars are supposed to have been brought from the old Roman Fort. At the end of the road turn right back into Ribchester branching left along Greenside to reach Water Street.

A royal guest at the inn

Intrigue and skulduggery provide a piquant dessert to this Ribblesdale ramble

Distance: 4.5 miles

Height: 350 feet (107 metres)

Start/finish: Ample parking space at a pull-in off the B6243 Longridge Road 200 metres west of the Punch Bowl approaching Hurst Green

Terrain: Enclosed grazing fields rise gradually from the floor of the Ribble Valley

Explorer 19 West Pennine Moors

Shops etc.: Hurst Green in the Ribble Valley

Prelude

A walk of 200 metres along the B6243 in an easterly direction will bring you to an old coaching inn called The Punch Bowl. In the early eighteenth century, this site became the headquarters of a notorious highwayman who preyed on unsuspecting travellers using this lonely stretch of the Ribble Valley. Ned King and his cronies would keep watch from a room above the stables selecting only the wealthiest victims to waylay and rob.

So successful was Lancashire's answer to Dick Turpin that he was known as 'The Phantom' on account of his ability to disappear following one of his robberies. But no highwayman can escape indefinitely from being brought to account for his nefarious deeds. And so it was with Ned King. Dogged perseverance eventually enabled the authorities to discover Ned's secret hideout.

Suspicion also fell on the landlord who, they thought, was sharing

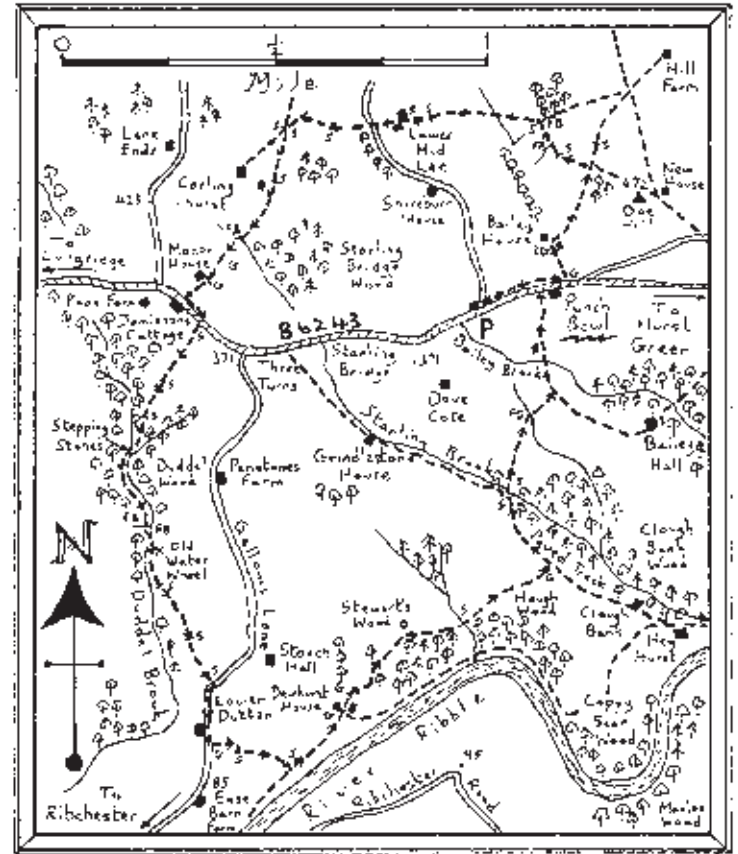
in the profits of Ned's nefarious escapades. When finally arrested and brought to trial, Ned King was found guilty and his body was hung in chains from a gibbet erected in nearby Gallows Lane.

His ghost was often heard and seen in the vicinity of the Punch Bowl which resulted in an exorcism being performed in the nineteenth century. But still he continued to haunt the pub. Bottles fell off shelves, beer pumps opened and chairs clattered over. Not until 1942 when a priest was summoned from Stonyhurst College to attempt once again the eradication of this troublesome spirit did Ned King finally disappear, hopefully this time forever. Unless, of course, you know better.

The Walk

After passing the Punch Bowl, take a left after 50 metres through a gate to stroll up the access track serving Bailey House. Keep right through the farmyard. Then make a diagonal crossing of the field behind aiming to the left of a prominent copse on Doe Hill. As a fence is approached, bear left to a stile. Once in the adjacent field follow the fence on the right to reach the left side of a wood straddling a footbridge *en route*.

Ned King hid out at the Punch Bowl.



Another footbridge followed by a stile will find you striding out west over a wide field. Keep above Shireburn House seen at the far side to reach Lower Hud Lee Farm, initially hidden from view. Mount the stile then amble down the fenced passage through the farmyard to cross straight over a narrow lane.

Follow the fence on your left to a corner where a stile gives onto the adjoining field. After 50 metres, a double stile will find you crossing

a grass tract, veering away from a major track leading down to Carlinghurst which is 50 metres to the right.

Keep in a direct line going downhill staying to the right of Starling Bridge Wood. You should reach the end of the field where a stile is mounted. Pass left of a newish barn and down to the far right corner to cross an old footbridge. Accompany the fence on your right in a direct line passing through two gates to reach the B6243 opposite Jamieson's Cottages.

Bear left for 100 metres, squeezing through the hedge on the far side to make a half left crossing of the field. A hedge will see you approaching the tree-lined glen of Duddel Brook. Mount the stile and follow this eastern limit of the glen before entering the dense tree cover by a stile 300 metres further down.

Stepping stones will deposit you on the far side of the stream where either the lower or higher level paths can be taken downstream. Either choices will find you crossing two footbridges to gain the opposite bank after which an old waterwheel housing is passed.

Exit the wood by a stile and follow a raised causeway down, mounting a stile midway to join Gallows Lane in the corner of the field. Continue downhill to pass the picturesque cottages of Lower Dutton nudging through a gate on the left. Stay on the left side of a hedge accompanying it round to the right after 100 metres to mount a stile.

Now on the right of the hedge, follow it down to mount a stile at the end and so joining the Ribble Way, a long-distance footpath that chaperones the river all the way down to the Irish Sea beyond Preston. Head left upstream along a paved road that leads into the yard of Dewhurst House. The Way bears right to follow the river to its source at Ribblehead in the Yorkshire Dales.

Here we leave the Way slanting right through a small gate and up a narrow hedged passage which is stony underfoot. Emerging onto higher ground by a gate, follow a set of white marker posts that provide an easy linkage across this section of the walk. Go through a gate at the top edge of Stewart's Wood forking away left when the fence veers down towards the river.



The picturesque setting of Lower Dutton.

Descend an easy grass slope to a stile and fieldbridge crossing of a stream flowing through Haugh Wood. Climb up the bank on the far side and make a direct crossing of the large field to a gate at the far right corner. Bear left along a paved bridleway for a quarter mile until a stile gives access to the trees enclosing Starling Brook. Drop down through the trees traversing the brook by a footbridge.

Another stile at the far side of the wood will find you crossing a field to bestride another footbridge on the left. Continue onward to meet the service road for Bailey Hall and follow it left back to the main road near to the Punch Bowl. And perchance a noggin or two with the spirit of Ned King to finish off this fine ramble.