

## **BRINGING ANCIENT PERAMBULATIONS TO LIFE**

**William Bowland, Lord of Bowland, and Mark Sutcliffe, an expert on Pennine walks, have joined forces to explore how ancient “perambulations” of the Forest might translate into less formal Forest walks.**

### **THE PERAMBULATIONS**

It has always been important for owners of property to mark the boundaries of their territory. The Lords of Bowland were no different from any other landholder. They felt impelled to record what they owned in order to enforce that ownership as and when circumstances demanded and in order to maximise their rents.

Historic Bowland once covered an area of almost 300 square miles. It comprised a Forest and a Liberty of ten manors spanning eight townships and four parishes straggling the borders of Lancashire and Yorkshire (Lancashire Record Office DDHCI). It was in consequence much too large for any sort of ceremonial “beating of the bounds”. To chart ownership required “perambulations”, a journey on horseback perhaps over a number of days, recording those features that marked out the Lord’s territory.

We have records of two such perambulations that took place in the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries when new Lords – Henry V, Duke of Lancaster, first Lord King of Bowland and the 1<sup>st</sup> Duke of Albemarle, respectively – sought to record the land and assets they owned.

Smith (1894:181) details the extent of the early Forest as recorded by King Henry’s men:

“From Graddell near Grange by the Hodder to Cross of Greate, north-east of the lordship of Hornby, to Croasdale and Whitedale; from Brennand by Tarnebrooke, Ughtersik, Millhouse, over the Threape Hawe to the stone in the Trough that divides Yorkshire from Lancashire. From thence west from Sykes, which bounds upon Marshay, Hathernwaite, Catshay, Calder, Bleasdale, Fairsnape, Blindhurst and Wolfhall, by the end of Chipping town, and about 16 rods down Chipping Brook to Red Bank. From thence, along the Pale, which bounds upon Thornley and Bradley; from thence by Clement

Townson's land, Rauthmell's land, to Wyerburne Foot, Browsholme, and Newhay. Then over Bradford and Grindleton moors, to the vaccary of Harrop, which bounds on south-east side of Bolton-by-Bowland".

The seventeenth-century Perambulation is explored in depth in Greenwood & Bolton (1955: 116 ff) but in essence, what both Perambulations show is that, for the most part, the modern-day civil parish boundaries of Easington, Bowland Forest High, Bowland Forest Low, Bowland-with-Leagram, Newton and Slaidburn still mark the outer edges of the original Forest.

The exception is the westernmost portion of the Forest which appears to have followed the line of the Calder River through Bleasdale. Also, Harrop was originally but is no longer a separate, isolated section of the Forest islanded between Lower Easington, Slaidburn and Grindleton.

These Perambulations contain a number of vanished placenames - most notably, Gradale, that stretch of the upper Hodder valley flanked by Collyholme and New House whose southernmost reaches now lie submerged beneath the waters of the Stocks Reservoir. Gradale must have lain due north of the drowned village of Stocks-in-Bowland but its name was already lost almost two centuries before the construction of that great artificial lake took place. Rushton/Rishton Grange, an ancient monastic grange whose image survives in Buck's *Yorkshire Sketch Book* of 1719-23 (Hall 1979), lay to the south-east of Gradale. Originally part of Kirkstall Abbey's Bowland holdings, it too now sits beneath the water.

Topography also plays a significant role. For instance, the Cross of Greet marks the highpoint of the Lune-Ribble watershed, dividing Tatham Fells from Slaidburn parish. A strategic crossing-point, it sits west of Catlow and south-west of Bowland Knotts, the gritstone crags (Old Norse *knotttr*, "craggy hill") that mark the northeasternmost boundary of the Honor of Clitheroe with its neighbor, the De Mowbray Honor of Burton-in-Lonsdale in North Craven.

Rivers and streams are important – the Calder, Chipping Brook, the Loud, the Hodder, Mill Brook (Wyerburne Foot), Holden Beck all mark boundaries. There are also obscure landmarks on the high north-western fells, such as Ughtersik (Middle English "outer stream"), references to former landowners (Townson at Stakes,

Rauthmell at Lees) and long forgotten bounds (the southern boundary of Leagram Park being *the Pale*).

The Perambulations tell us much about the ancient Forest but it is possible that an even earlier sense of its boundaries may be gleaned from the occurrence of *eaves* affixes in Bowland place-names. The Old English *efes* (Middle English *eves*) denotes the “edge of a wood”. Tellingly, Bashall Eaves, Waddington Eaves, Grindleton Eaves were all *vills* whose boundaries may at one time have marked out the southern and southeasternmost extent of the Domesday Forest (Smith 1961: 192).

Today, the division of Bowland Forest into two large administrative units - *Great Bowland* (Bowland Forest High and Bowland Forest Low) and *Little Bowland* (Bowland-with-Leagram) – continues to reflect these ancient boundaries.

The Perambulations also help us understand how the extent of the Lordship of Bowland was established from earliest times as being coterminous with the extent of Forest and the land of the ten manors within the Liberty of Bowland, including, from the late thirteenth century, the demesne of Slaidburn with its townships of Newton, West Bradford and Grindleton.

## **FROM PERAMBULATION TO PRESENT-DAY CIRCULAR WALK**

We have used the historical detail of the Perambulations to create a challenging 10-mile circular walk from Slaidburn. This walk explores the south-eastern extremities of Bowland – tracing the boundary first outlined by Henry V’s men and then re-traced in the late seventeenth century:

*“Then over Bradford and Grindleton moors, to the vaccary of Harrop, which bounds on south-east side of Bolton-by-Bowland.”*

Starting from the car park in Slaidburn, the route traverses the elevated pastures above the village, climbing gently to Harrop Fold, then more steeply through the woods and onto the summit of Bradford Fell.

## **START**

From car park, go over bridge and take footpath left along riverbank, then climb through the Coronation Meadows at Bell Sykes Farm and along the beck to Lower High Field.

Over stile, head right up track, then right through gateway after quarry, across field to barn conversion and half-left onto track to cross roads, continuing straight on along lane, then left along road, sign-posted Bolton-by-Bowland.

After 500 metres, beyond bridge, take footpath on right just after lay-by. Continue over fields to Harrop Hall.

At farm gate, follow path left along field boundary. Continue alongside wall than straight ahead over fields to Harrop Lodge. Continue through farmyard, then half-left, sticking to field boundary. Cross track and at second stile, take footpath half-right past Cockleth House towards Harrop Fold.

Go through the hamlet and back onto the fell through the gate. Take the left-hand track to Swan Barn and continue towards the plantation covering the top of the Fell.

At stile above swan barn, turn left, following path along edge of plantation, then right along fire break and right again onto path running along far side of plantation.

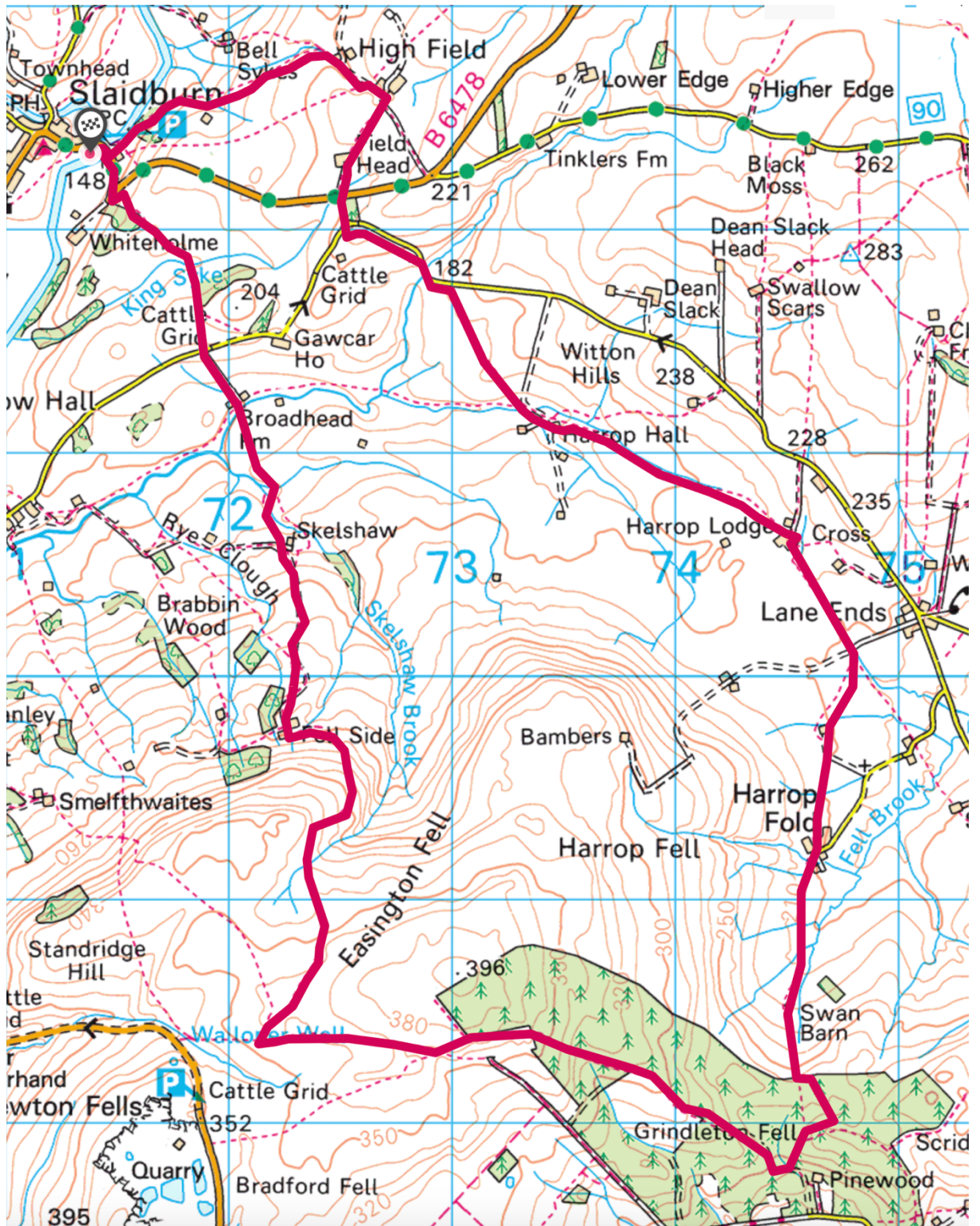
After 400 metres, turn right onto track and follow it right again as it climbs steadily beside the heath and conifers before plunging into the woods and climbing steeply. At gate onto clearing, follow path half-left, climbing to the small cairn that comes into view on the skyline.

Beyond cairn, head left along wall to gatepost, then stay on right-hand path and over ladder stile. After 500 metres, path meets a track - follow track right - almost doubling back on yourself, before it swings to the left and descends.

Follow the track down the Fell and through the farmyard. At driveway of next farm, where track turns L, head through gate straight ahead and down field boundary, then right through two gates and over the stepping stones.

Go through metal gate, then half-right across field through gates into farmyard. Go right, then left and up track to the lane. Cross lane and continue over rise, then descend to left of coppice to road.

Turn right and take footpath 50 metres on left, then over bridge and back to car park.



## REFERENCES

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