

LANCASHIRE LIFE

Exploring the lovely little market town of Clitheroe and its surrounding villages in search of tempting local produce

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY: Carol Kubicki



Carol Kubicki...

... and her partner, Anthony, use their Devon Sundowner to pursue their hobbies of walking and cycling while exploring historical and natural environments

RIGHT The war memorial on Castle Hill in Clitheroe with Pendle Hill in the distance; Fresh produce on Clitheroe market

If we are a nation of shopkeepers, then the Lancashire market town of Clitheroe is surely a jewel in the retail crown. The delightful town centre offers a cornucopia of independent local businesses, putting it above the run of the mill and offering an excellent alternative to global corporate enterprise.

Having walked the 20 minutes into town from The Camping and Caravanning Club's site beside the River Ribble at Edisford Bridge, we were easily diverted from shopping by a climb up to Clitheroe Castle. Set on the landscaped mound of Castle Hill, just the keep remains of a Norman castle, said to be the smallest in the country. From the parapet we had an extensive view of Clitheroe and the surrounding countryside, with the distinctive shape of Pendle Hill to the south and the moorland hills of the Bowland Fells to the north.

As we were enjoying the panorama, a man in red livery and sporting a three-cornered hat swept past us and proceeded to ring his handbell. "Oyez! Oyez!" he shouted, before delivering a message about

Sausage Shop stretches across Lancashire. Around 75 different varieties of sausages are made on the premises, including pork and pineapple, chilli and beef and Guinness. This is all wasted on two vegetarians, but it was certainly worth a window shop as we sauntered along the bustling streets.

More to our taste was D Byrne & Co, wine merchants based in the Ribble Valley for over 130 years. Just perusing the labels in this atmospheric, cavern-like shop, with its heady scent of fermented grapes and aged wood, was an experience.

We wandered through cellars packed from floor to ceiling with wines, spotting some familiar place names from our travels around Europe. We came away with a small bottle of sweet Tokaj to remind of us of our time in Hungary.

The Emporium is another Clitheroe institution: a combination of coffee shop, wine bar, brasserie and furniture and designer accessories store in an old Methodist chapel. Surrounded by large mirrors and dramatic lighting, I felt as if I had been transported to a smart European

"We had an extensive view of Clitheroe and surrounding countryside, with the distinctive shape of Pendle Hill"



a community meeting and finishing with a flourishing sweep of his hat. This was Roland Hailwood, who has been carrying out the honorary duties of town crier for the last 30 years.

With ringing in our ears, we walked back down the hill. We'd intended to visit the Castle Museum housed in buildings just below the keep, as I wanted to learn more about the history, heritage and culture of the area. Unfortunately, it was closed due to a problem with the water supply. With the museum saved for another day, we headed for the high street.

The renown of Cowmans Famous

city; it was so reminiscent of a Viennese coffee house.

Using our Ribble Valley Ranger bus tickets, we made the short journey to Sawley, a small village on the banks of the Ribble with an excellent pub, The Spread Eagle, and a ruined Cistercian abbey. Founded in 1148, Sawley Abbey was never a prosperous order and the monks complained to their benefactor, blaming poor harvests, marshy ground and an inhospitable climate for their lack of wealth.

However, their paucity of funds led to one of the abbey's most notable features: its very short nave, the outline of which ►



Our trip summary

OUR MOTORHOME

VW T5 (2.5TDI) is called the Blue Bus. The great design makes good use of the small space that suits an active couple



2007 Devon Sundowner

THE JOURNEY

We travelled from our home in Salford to Clitheroe on the M61 and A59 and spent two nights on site

THE COSTS

Fuel average 32mpg.....	£13.49
Site fees.....	£50.90
Entrance fees (Whalley Abbey; two adults).....	£4
Bus fares..... (Two Ribble Valley Ranger tickets)	£13

98 miles

Total £81.39



INFORMATION

MAPS

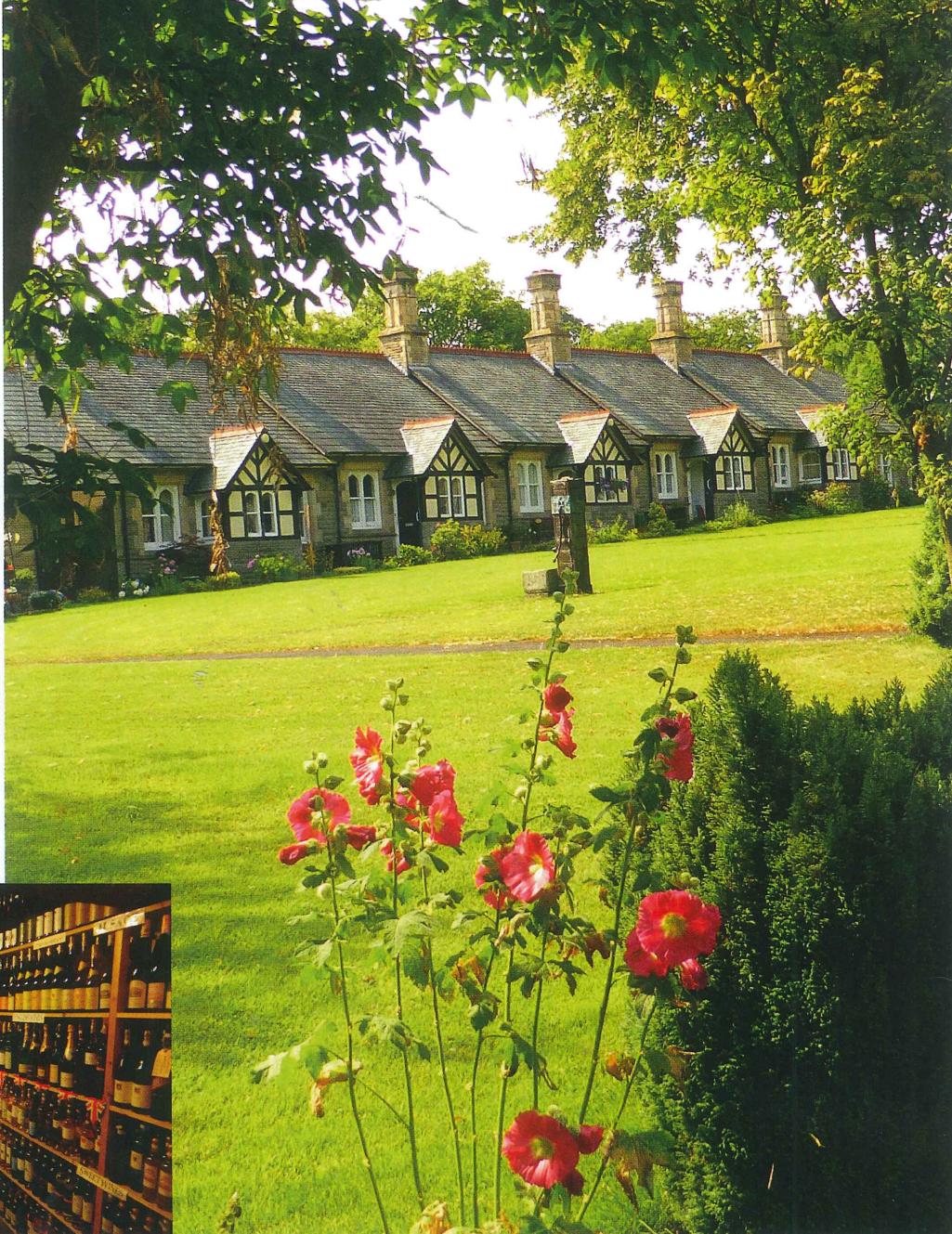
For walking maps around
Slaidburn

 slaidburnvillagehall.co.uk

WEBSITES

 www.visitribblevalley.co.uk

 visitclitheroe.co.uk



can still be seen. After the Dissolution of the monasteries, most of the stone was used in local farmhouses. Enough remains to get a sense of the buildings and the night staircase, which linked the monk's dormitories to the church, is still visible.

The Ribble Way follows the river from its source in Yorkshire to the Irish Sea. We have previously walked all 73 miles of this long-distance footpath. It's a beautiful river and we were happy to be revisiting a short section of it.

From Sawley, our route took us along quiet lanes and through fields until a stone bridge where we headed away from the river and into the village of Chatburn to sample Hudsons ice cream. We justified the indulgence with the extra mile of walking!

The family-run shop was formerly a toll bar on the old route of the A59 and ice cream has been made here for over 70 years using the same recipe. Varieties change

as seasonal local fruit becomes available and I enjoyed the delicious taste of fresh gooseberry that day.

From Chatburn, we skirted around the large quarry of the Ribblesdale cement works to rejoin the river, stopping to watch a heron, ducklings and a little egret swooping overhead.

At another bridge, we left the bank for the picturesque village of Waddington. Nowadays a regular Best Kept Village competition winner, Waddington hasn't always been such a bucolic spot.

I was intrigued to read that, in the fifteenth century, this was a place of deceit and subterfuge. During the War of the Roses, the fleeing Henry VI, the young Lancastrian king, was captured by the Yorkists after his refuge at Waddington Hall was betrayed for a ransom.

A particularly charming feature of Waddington is its almshouses. Built in

ABOVE LEFT D Byrne & Co wine merchants in Clitheroe

ABOVE RIGHT Waddington's almshouses are still in use

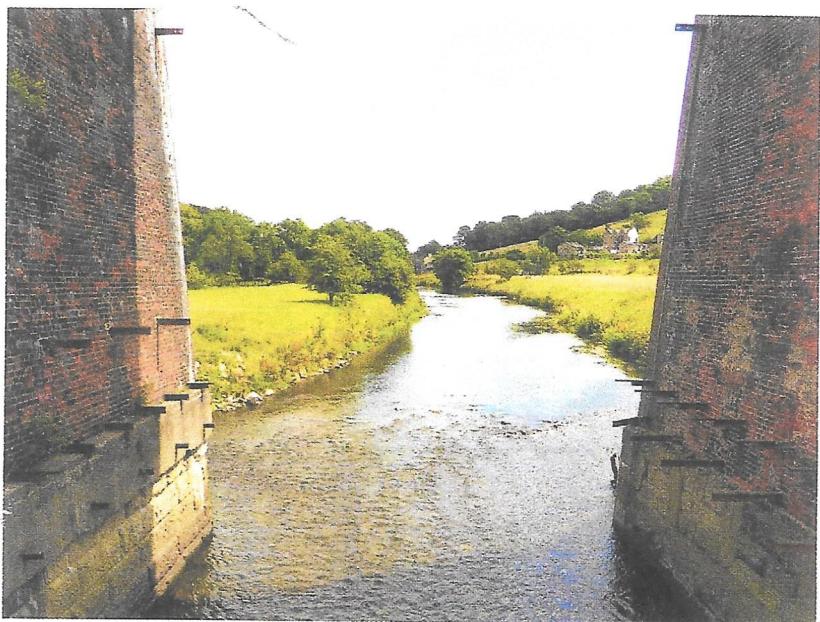
the seventeenth century for widows of local farmers, they are still providing independent living for elderly women today.

Around four miles from Clitheroe is Whalley, the site of another Cistercian abbey established in 1296. A 'rival' abbey adjoining the lands of the unhappy monks at Sawley led to unholy quarrelling between the two orders over food and fishing rights. Whalley was actually a much wealthier abbey and this added to the woes of the Brothers in Sawley.

Of course, the Dissolution of the monasteries also came the way of Whalley and ruins are all that remain. Exploring these was a worthwhile way to spend an hour or so in the late afternoon.

West of the abbey is a Tudor-style Catholic church (from 1926) set in a woodland garden. Further along the road took us underneath the imposing abbey gatehouse to the Whalley viaduct with a span of 48 red-brick arches over the River Calder. Whalley also has its share of independent shops, including high-class boutiques and gentleman's outfitters way out of our budget.

The Bowland Fells, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, quickly rises to the north of Clitheroe and we were soon in moorland hill country. We thought that the grey stone buildings of the village of Slaiburn, nine miles away, had a Yorkshire-look about them – and were not far off the mark. Until the boundary changes of 1974, the Ribble was the border with the West Riding of Yorkshire, putting Slaiburn well



and truly in Yorkshire.

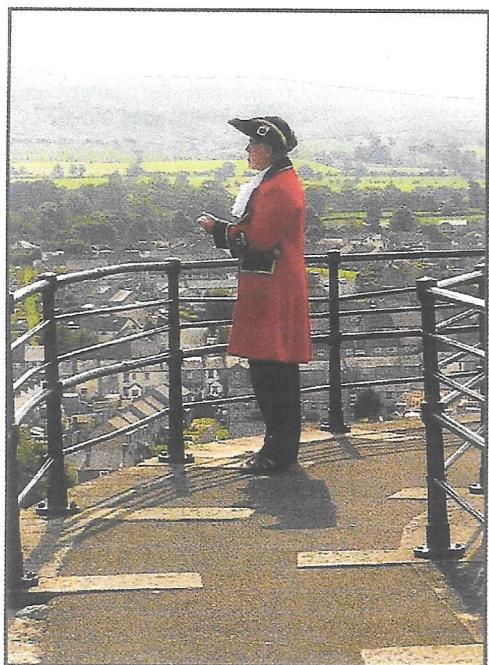
It is now a tranquil village, but its history suggests there was much more bustling in the past. In 1822 we could have shopped all day here in many stores, including victuallers, shoemakers, cloggers, butchers, grocers, drapers, tailors and a hat manufacturer. The junction where the war memorial and the Jubilee Well now stand is thought to have been the marketplace.

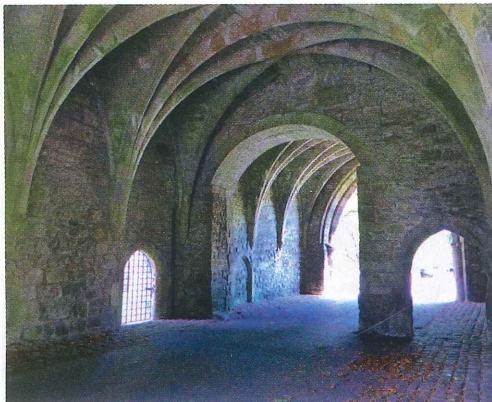
Present-day Slaiburn is unspoilt with a café by the river, a youth hostel run by volunteers in a former pub and the rambling Hark to Bounty, the remaining village ➤

ABOVE Whalley Viaduct has 48 red-brick arches spanning the River Calder

BELOW LEFT Clitheroe's Town Crier, Roland Hailwood

BELOW RIGHT Whalley Abbey





pub. This pub is worth a visit as it serves tempting food and is full of character.

Our shopping spree took us to Vanilla Angel in the row of cottages on the road towards the river to buy a box of handmade chocolates. Small independent shops offer a personal and intimate experience that is hard to beat.

Angela, the talented chocolate and cakemaker, was also able to tell me some of the history of her Chapel Street business. It used to be the village co-op and the stables behind the shop still show the names of the horses above the doors.

On previous visits to Slaidburn, we have rambled up to the lonely and wild spot of Stocks Reservoir and along the River Hodder to the next village of Newton. On this visit, we simply enjoyed wandering through the village admiring the cottages and the view from the church graveyard. We watched as a stoat (or a weasel) flitted in

and out of a drystone wall, but we weren't quick enough to spot if the tip of its tail was black or not; apparently, it's the only way to tell the difference.

Heading back to Clitheroe, we stopped at the viewpoint on Waddington Fell for a lunch made up of some of our purchases. This got me thinking about all the hard-working shopkeepers we had met in the area, every one of them offering excellent service and products. It seems to me that England will continue to be a nation of shopkeepers for some time. **mmm**

ABOVE CLOCKWISE The fourteenth century gatehouse in Whalley; the village of Waddington; the beer garden at The Waddington Arms

WE STAYED AT

Clitheroe Camping and Caravanning Club, Edisford House, Clitheroe, Lancashire BB7 3LA

01200 425294 campingandcaravanningclub.co.uk

1 March to 3 November £ Two adults, pitch and electric: From £14