



Landmarks in LANCASHIRE

Visit the eye-catching Panopticon sculptures for a quirky look at the Pennines

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Carol Kubicki...

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

On the culture spectrum, I am probably nearer to philistine when it comes to art. For me, the best landscape is one seen from the top of a hill rather than in a gallery. However, I make an exception for open-air sculptures as these can be incorporated into a walk and are fun to explore. They can change perceptions of a place and even improve it.

In the Pennine valleys of east Lancashire they have such sculptures down to a fine art, with four large examples called Panopticons. This name suggests a comprehensive view and each distinctive Panopticon sculpture is in an elevated position, designed to be seen and to see from. We decided to spend a few days exploring the area, visiting the Panopticons.

“The distant hum was reminiscent of a choir holding a note as wind whistles through the hollow tubes”

Even the least classically trained can guess that any word with *pan* in it has its origins in a Greek myth. Panopticon probably relates to Panoptes, a giant with 100 eyes who was an excellent watchman because he could always keep some eyes open. This myth was exploited by Jeremy Bentham, an eighteenth century scholar who first coined the word 'panopticon' for his circular prison design, which permitted a single guard to observe all inmates at the same time from a central guardroom.

Each Panopticon is associated with a particular town. The sculpture nearest to Burnley is the Singing Ringing Tree and is high on the hillside. Although you can park at Crown Point Road car park and have just a 10-minute walk to the sculpture, if you

have the time and ability, a lovely 7.5-mile walk from Towneley Hall is a satisfying way to reach this impressive and entertaining sculpture. Towneley Hall is a fine fourteenth century building with extensive parkland to stroll around and a café.

After refreshments, we walked through woodland, around the golf course and up to the moors. As we approached, we caught glimpses of the metal, windblown tree-shaped sculpture. To really appreciate this sculpture, though, we had to get up close.

What makes the Singing Ringing Tree so engaging is that it is a wind-powered sound sculpture. As we walked the last few yards we started to hear a distant hum, reminiscent of a choir holding a note. This sound is made as the wind whistles through the hollow tubes of the sculpture. It is always windy up here so the tree is always singing! Walking around the sculpture, the tone and pitch of the tune changes with the wind speed and direction.

Standing nearly 10ft (3m) tall, the tree has quickly become a local landmark. From the superb viewpoint we could see across the town with Turf Moor, home of Burnley Football Club, in the foreground and the distinctive Pendle Hill on the horizon.

The next day we headed east from Burnley along the M65 to Colne, stopping in this quirky town, with successive rows of characteristic and charming stone terraced houses clinging to the valley sides, to get fresh bread for our picnic. Easily distracted, we ended up in an Italian café for coffee and a slice of gooey cake while we browsed an exhibition of photographs of international blues singers taken at the annual Great British Rhythm and Blues Festival held in Colne every August. This is when the town comes alive with music.

We didn't have to walk far to get to the Panopticon called Atom above Wycooler ➤

RIGHT The Singing Ringing Tree above Burnley

INSET Towneley Hall, Burnley



Trip summary

OUR MOTORHOME

2015 Devon Tempest on a Renault Master MWB 2.3-litre. This is our second Devon Conversions 'van. At 5.3m we think it's enormous and, with a bathroom, also luxurious



2015 Devon Tempest



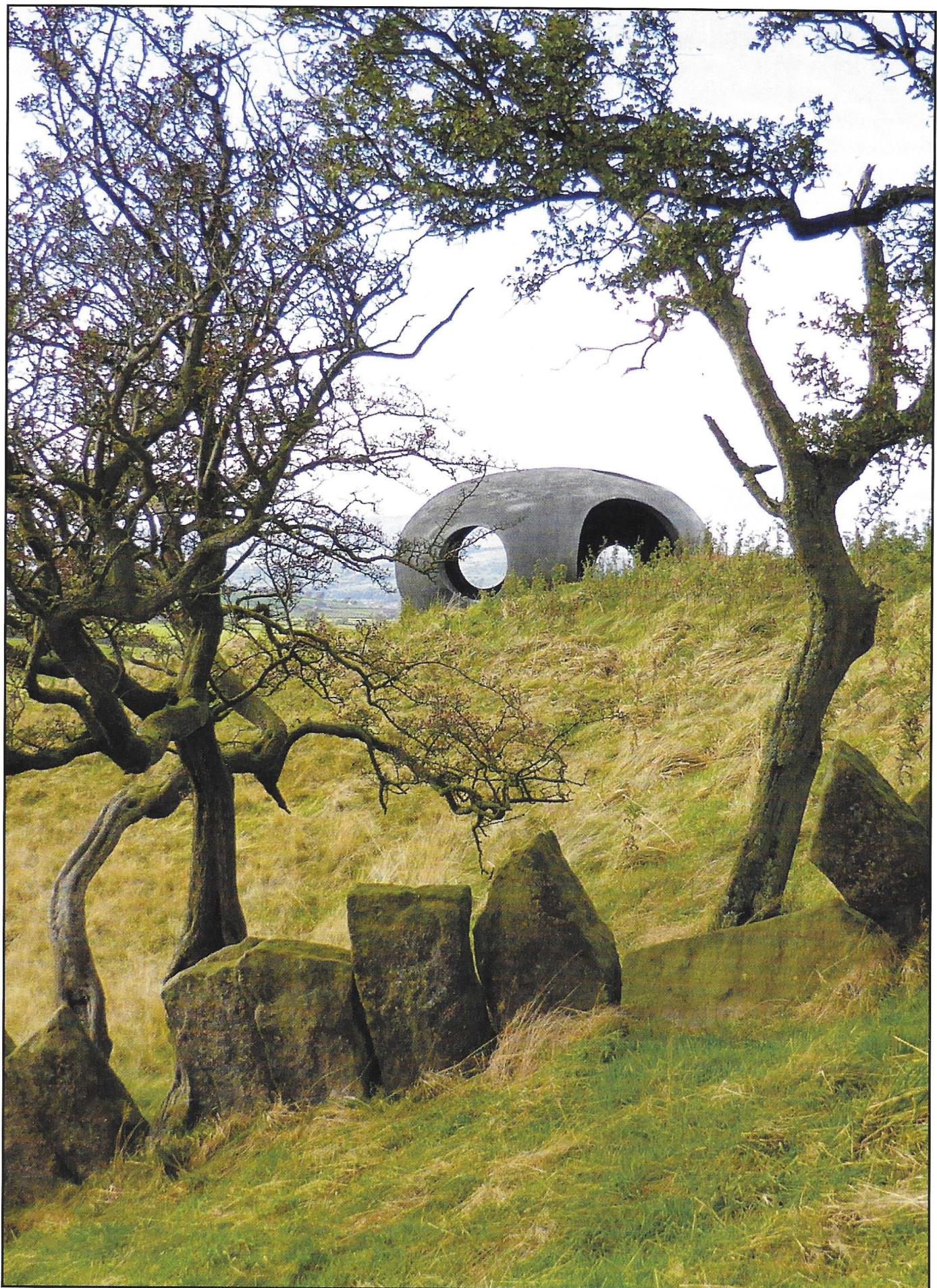
THE JOURNEY From home in Greater Manchester we travelled to Burnley via the M60, M66 and A56 and spent two nights on site

102 miles

THE COSTS

Fuel average 35mpg £18.74
Site fees £31

Total £49.74



INFORMATION

Panopticons

 midpenninearts.org.uk/panopticons
 visitlancashire.com/things-to-do/panopticons-p96590

Local walking leaflets

 visitlancashire.com/things-to-do/walking-routes/heritage-and-arts-walks

Towneley Hall

 burnley.gov.uk/residents/towneley-hall

Gawthorpe Hall

 nationaltrust.org.uk/gawthorpe-hall/

Lamberts Mill Footwear Museum and shopping

 lambertsmill.com/

Helmshore Mills Textile Museum

 lancashire.gov.uk/leisure-and-culture/museums/helmshore-mills-textile-museum.aspx

Colne's Great British R&B Festival

 bluesfestival.co.uk

LEFT The Atom in Wycoller Country Park and the vaccary walls

BELOW LEFT Barrowford and Pendle Water

BELOW RIGHT Wycoller Hall, thought to be the inspiration for Ferndean in *Jane Eyre*

Country Park. The sculpture is next to the Haworth Road car park, between Colne and Haworth. This might explain why it has suffered slightly from vandalism as the large, central, silver-coloured ball that reflected the landscape has now gone.

The Atom, unlike the Singing Ringing Tree, sits in the landscape, rather than dominating it. The bronze-coated structure is reminiscent of the large glacial rocks typical of the area. With openings on all sides, the Atom provides a sheltered stage from which to see the landscape.

Pendle Hill is still on show from here, but it is the near landscape that captivated me at the Atom. I was particularly struck by the pattern of the fields, the contrasting high moorland and wooded valley and the unusual, irregular stone slabs of local gritstone that were used to mark field boundaries. Looking like rows of tombstones, these were used to keep cattle secure as part of the vaccary system of small-scale cattle farming.

After exploring the sculpture, we sat savouring our picnic, watching the sun and shadows moving across the Wycoller valley, constantly changing the colour of Atom. We had the car park to ourselves for a while and spotted a kestrel hovering over the fields.

Keen to stretch our legs and inspired by the views, we set off on the hour-long circular walk from the Atom to Wycoller Country Park and village. The village is closed to vehicles of non-residents.

Following the path down to Wycoller Beck, occasionally looking back at the changing views of the Atom, we joined a tree-lined track, which took us past three very different ancient bridges. The Clam

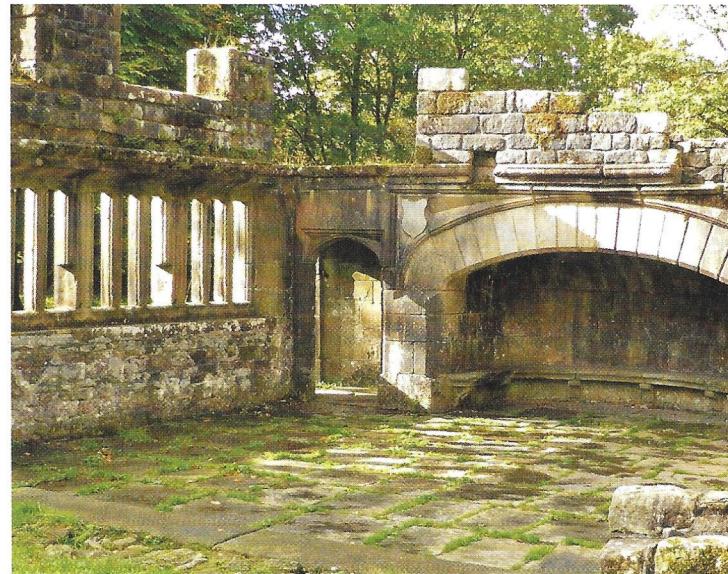
Bridge came first; this simple, single-stone span bridge is approximately 1,000 years old. The large stone is thought to be a recycled Neolithic standing stone. We followed the trail through a willow arch, spotting a noisy wren and a jay.

Nearer to Wycoller village we came to the Clapper Bridge, around 120 years old and constructed from two large stones. This bridge had a deep groove worn in to the top until a local farmer's daughter tripped in the groove, fell and died. In his grief, her father toiled to chisel the bridge flat.

By the village is the Packhorse Bridge, a twin-arched construction, which would have been part of the route to transport cloth from Colne to Keighley.

Also here is Wycoller Hall, a ruined sixteenth century manor house. The hall is possibly the model for Ferndean in *Jane Eyre* as Haworth is only over the hill. Charlotte Brontë was an enthusiastic walker and Wycoller was a favourite haunt of hers. The hall would have been only recently empty in the 1840s when Charlotte visited; now it is a brooding and roofless ruin. There is a visitor centre to find out more about this fascinating historic village and a tearoom.

Our base for exploring east Lancashire was Smithson Farm Camping Park, near Burnley. This small site has four narrow hardstanding pitches with hook-up. However, there is a friendly welcome and the compactness encouraged neighbourliness. We were soon sharing travellers' tales with other motorhomers over a glass of red, reminding us that one of the fantastic things about a campervan is meeting people with a similar outlook on life. The site is on the location of ▶



A further reminder of the changing fortunes of these Lancashire valley mill towns is opposite the Temperance Bar. Now a garden, this was the site of Rawtenstall's Astoria Ballroom, a dancing venue for big bands which hosted international stars such as Joe Loss and Ted Heath.

As many as 800 dancers would pack onto the maplewood sprung dancefloor after a hard week working in the thriving local footwear industry. In the 1960s, the music changed, but Rawtenstall's Astoria was still able to attract big names. *The Kinks* and *The Who* played in this small town.

Lamberts Mill Shoe Museum and Helmshore Mills Textile Museum now tell the stories of the former textile and footwear industry in these valleys.

The shortest walk to the Panopticon called the Halo is a steep one up the valley side from Haslingden. A pleasant and more gentle three-mile round trip from Winfields Outdoors camping and clothing shop is definitely a better option. This shop has a large car park with plenty of room for the biggest motorhome.

We both hiked up the hillside, following the lanes and tracks to the Halo, set on an

old landfill site on Cribden Hill overlooking Haslingden and Rawtenstall. For me, this large, steel, dish-shaped structure supported on a 16.4ft (5m) high tripod, clearly expressed the concepts underpinning the Panopticon project.

The panorama is symbolised by the circular and open construction and by the extensive view. The nearby wind turbines power LEDs that light up the Halo at night.

This was definitely a case of saving the best until last and we stood for some time taking in the view across the Irwell valley and spotting landmarks from Yorkshire to Cheshire on the orientation table. We could see as far away as Greater Manchester and home and I wondered why we hadn't been here before.

East Lancashire had managed to give me a bit of a culture shock. By creating new landmarks for the area, I had been encouraged to see the beauty of the post-industrial valleys with new eyes.

This is a delightful and distinctive area with plenty to see and do. I was so glad these quirky and fun sculptures had brought us to the east Lancashire Pennines for an enjoyable few days. **mmm**

BELOW CLOCKWISE

Colourfields – the Panopticon in Blackburn; View across the Haslingden valley from the Halo; The Broad Walk and lime trees in autumn splendour in Corporation Park, Blackburn



SEARCH

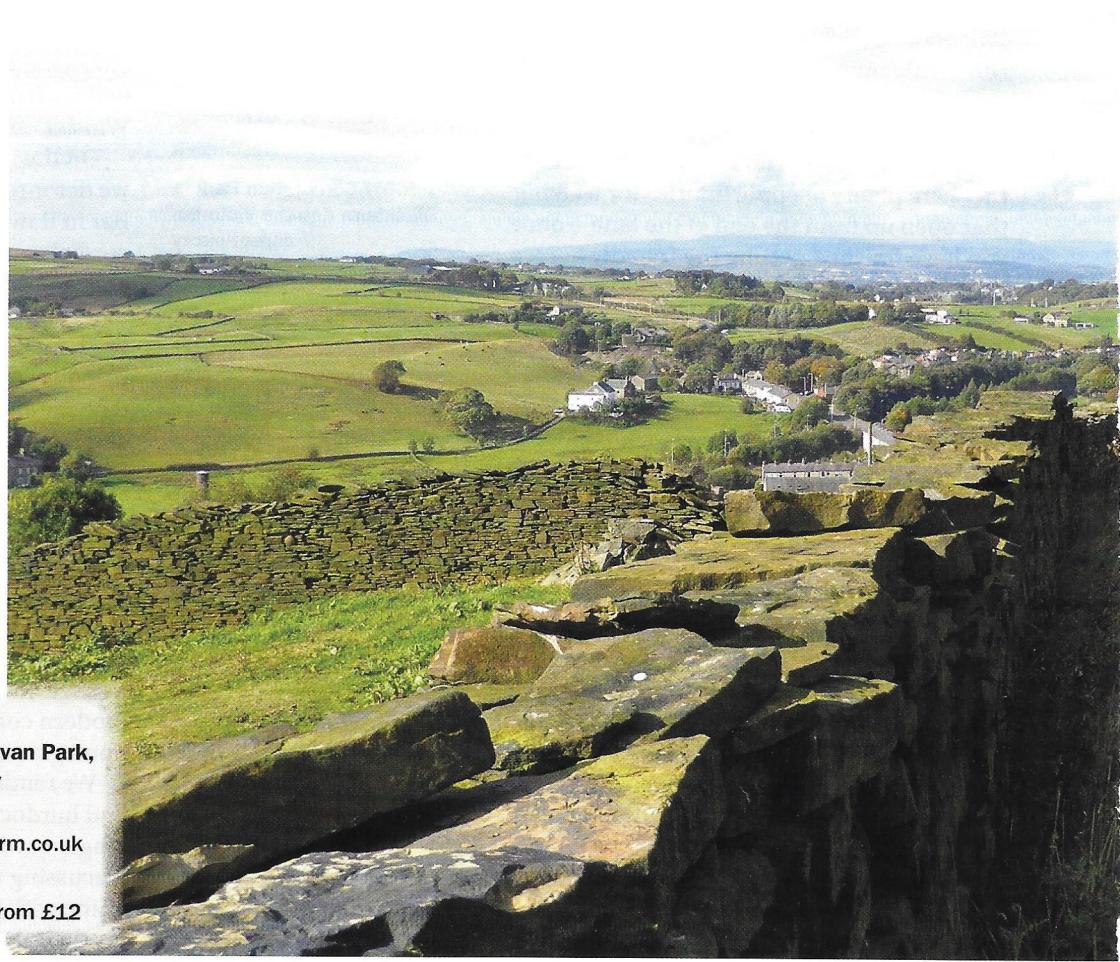
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REVIEW

Stayed at a great site?

Don't forget to write a review on Campsite Finder



WE STAYED AT

Smithson Farm Camping and Caravan Park,
Woodend, Reedley Hallows, Burnley
BB12 9DR

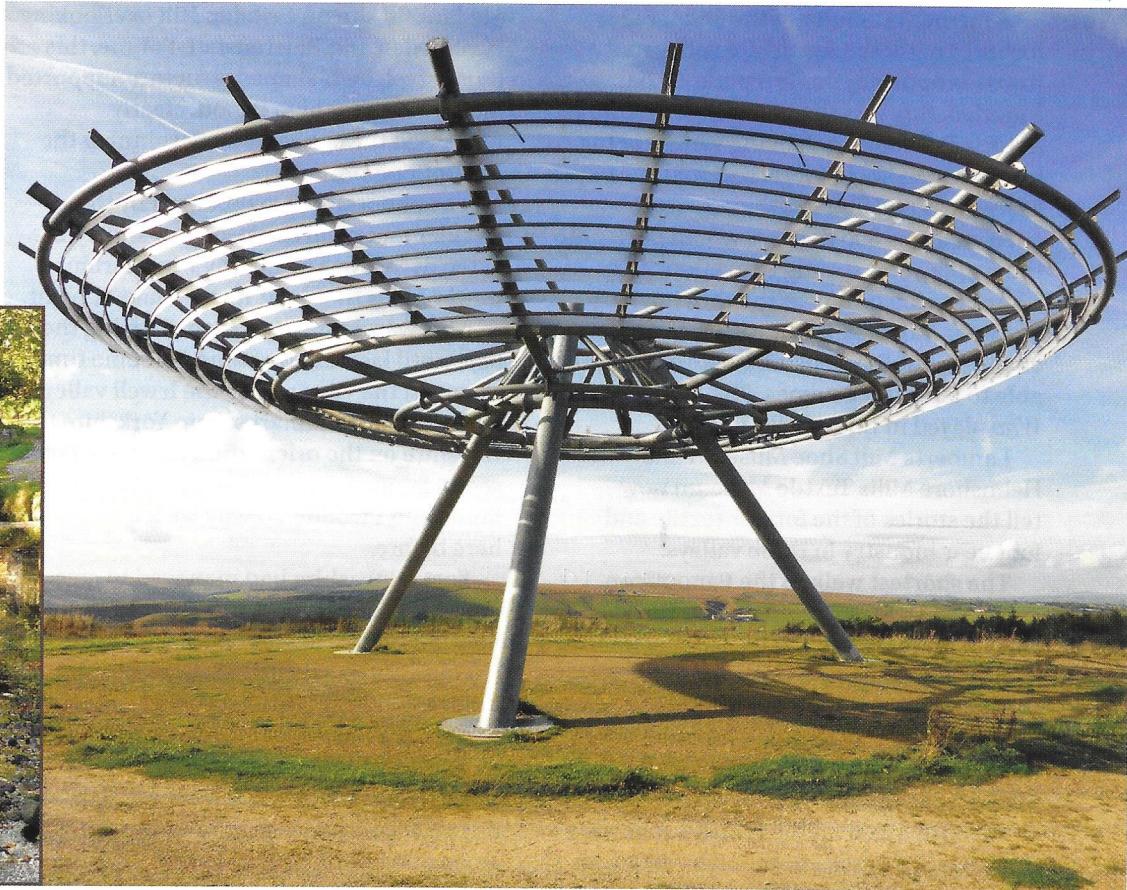
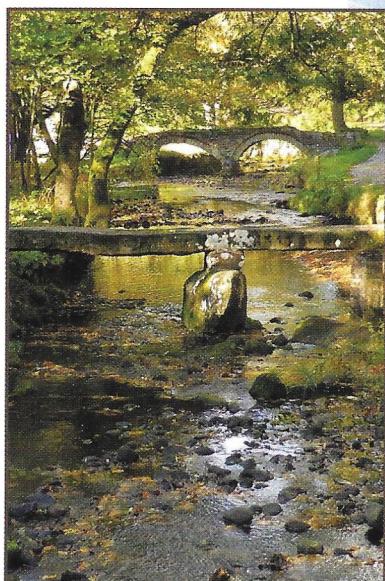
01282 420701 smithsonfarm.co.uk

All year

Two adults, pitch and electric: From £12

TOP TIP

A great sight is to visit **Haslingden** at night and see the spectacular Halo lit up by LEDs that are powered by the surrounding wind turbines



Woodend Colliery. The enterprising owners run a little museum about the Lancashire mine, as well as a small café which sells their own jams and chutneys.

The River Calder runs near the site and there are plenty of opportunities for walking that open up from the end of the lane – once you have finished petting the friendly horses in the adjacent paddocks.

The Burnley Way crosses Woodend Lane. This 40-mile long-distance route can be followed in short sections. Turning left, it is a flat 2.5 miles to the delightful market town of Padiham. As you walk you catch glimpses of Gawthorpe Hall, an Elizabethan House now in the care of the National Trust.

Blackburn doesn't have the steep-sided valley characteristics of Burnley and Colne, but it has a Panopticon called Colourfields, set in Corporation Park. We set off in the 'van, finding plenty of on-street parking around the park.

Colourfields is at the top of this charming hillside park and makes use of the former cannon battery where two bronze cannons from Sebastopol once stood until sold for scrap during the last war. We had a 'Titanic' moment leaning into the wind on the prow-like railings of the sculpture!

Of all the Panopticons, this was the only

ABOVE LEFT The Clapper and Pack Horse Bridges in Wycoller Country Park

ABOVE RIGHT The Halo above Haslingden

BETWEEN Corporation Park in Blackburn and the Victorian conservatory

one that was disappointing. The view was restricted by the trees and the sculpture had no sense of place. Apart from our 'Kate Winslet' moment, we'd little to entertain us.

On the way to the Haslingden Panopticon we detoured to Fitzpatrick's Temperance Bar in Rawtenstall. The lure of a glass of hot cordial was too great to ignore on a fine, chilly morning.

The Temperance Movement started in the Lancashire town of Preston in 1835, in response to binge-drinking concerns of the day. Temperance bars promoted abstinence and the movement flourished in the northern industrial towns.

Fitzpatrick was a prominent brand and, at one time, ran over 40 shops. Although the movement died out, this one temperance bar survived in Rawtenstall, continuing to make cordials on site. Today, the vintage cordial business is booming with a range of 14 cordials, from sarsaparilla to modern combinations like cranberry and pomegranate.

We reminisced over a glass of dandelion and burdock and a warming lemon and ginger cordial. We sat in the little café discussing which bottle we should take home with us while local people nipped in for their favourite tipple. ▶

