

SAMLESBURY



A HERITAGE TRAIL

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Samlesbury is a large parish, consisting of an estimated 4,386 statute acres, and it almost connects Preston to Blackburn.

Many commuters passing along the M6, A59 and A677 do not realise that beautiful countryside and a wealth of flora and fauna lie only minutes away from these busy roads, which are too often treated as race tracks.

Our historical legacies include **two Grade I** listed buildings (ie. St. Leonard's-the-Less Parish Church and the Higher Hall), an impressive number of Grade II listed buildings, and a possible motte and bailey **castle**. In addition we hold our **local Saint**, John Southworth (martyred in 1654), in the very highest esteem.

The trail starts at the **Five Barred Gate Samlesbury Hotel** and there is a Preston/Blackburn bus stop close by. Alternatively, the manager of the hotel kindly permits walkers to leave their cars on the large car park, for which we would like to record our grateful thanks.

The route is circular, passes through a very interesting part of Samlesbury, and covers about 3½ miles. You will see St. Mary and St. John Southworth's Chapel at Southbank, take a possible deviation to the Parish Church at Church Bottoms¹, and walk along Potters Lane, the Avenue, Dean Lane and Whalley Road.

PLEASE OBSERVE THE COUNTRY CODE

Enjoy the countryside and respect its life and work.

Guard against all risks of fire.

Leave gates as you find them.

Keep dogs on a lead or under close control.

Keep to public paths on farmland.

Use gates and stiles to cross hedges, fences and walls.

Leave livestock, crops and machinery alone.

Take your litter home.

Do not pollute the water courses.

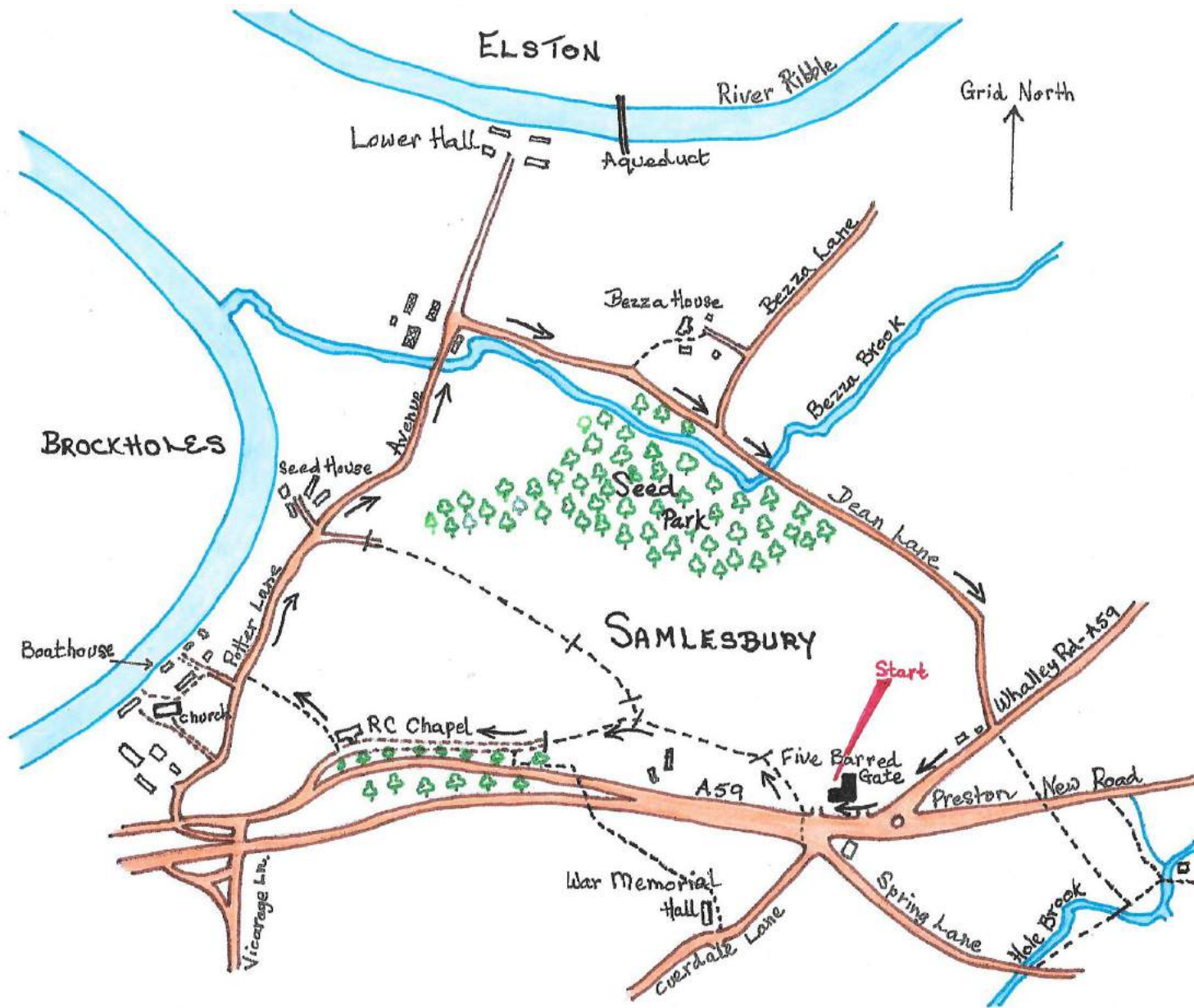
Protect wildlife, plants and trees.

Take special care on roads and face the on-coming traffic.

Make no unnecessary noise, because it disturbs/frightens the wild life.

¹ Picture on opening page: Church Bottoms c1920, by Albert Woods, ARCA (1871-1944): taken from *Lancashire* by F.A. Bruton, MA Lit.D.

There used to be numerous stands of wild cherries, or 'merry' trees around the church. The farm was also an ale house, and when the trees were a mass of fragrant, creamy blossom in May, they held their Merry Fair. Vendors from Blackburn and Preston would bring ginger bread and other treats in either a hand, or dog cart, then on the following Sunday, a second fair was held near the New Hall pub. The practice appears to have been discontinued in the late 19th century.



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ENTER THE FOOTPATH BY THE TRAFFIC LIGHTS AND FOLLOW THE HEDGE RUNNING ALONGSIDE THE FIVE BARRED GATE CAR PARK. GO THROUGH THE GATE AHEAD AND WALK ALONG THE LEFT-HAND HEDGE SIDE, MAKING FOR THE STILE IN THE FACING HEDGE.

CROSS THE FIELD AHEAD, KEEPING CLOSE TO THE RIGHT-HAND HEDGE. NEGOTIATE THE NEXT STILE, AND ENTER AN ANCIENT TRACK THAT USED TO BE KNOWN AS ROMAN WALK.

A break in the left-hand banking indicates the way down to a footbridge over the little stream, and then emerges on Preston New Road.

Until the New Road opened in 1826, Roman Walk was a busy thoroughfare leading to the boat house, (which was also a beer shop), and both churches.



St. Mary and St. John Southworth's Chapel

PASS ALONGSIDE ST. MARY & ST. JOHN SOUTHWORTH'S CHAPEL.

This lovely little place of worship is Grade II listed and was built as a **barn church** in 1818. It is the oldest Mission in the Salford Diocese. One of the relics of **St. John Southworth** (who was canonised in 1970), is kept here, and the Sanctuary Cross is made of timber reclaimed from the staircase of the ruinous Lower Hall. You will find the chapel open on Sundays for the 9.15.am. Mass.

The parish registers contain some quite irrelevant entries, including recipes for rheumatism, stroke in calves, and a five guinea wager between two clergymen!



Until a larger building was opened on Nab Lane, the present **church hall** served as a school, before being converted into cottages.

The cottages at St. Mary and St. John Southworth's Chapel, Southbank c1890.

ONCE OUT OF THE CHURCH GROUNDS, TAKE A RIGHT-HAND TURN ONTO A FURTHER STRETCH OF THE OLD LANE. ENTER THE FIELD AND CONTINUE DOWN TO POTTERS LANE AT THE BOTTOM. THE ROUTE THEN TURNS RIGHT.

At this point however, you may like to deviate slightly. This would entail walking a few yards along Ferry Lane, which lies slightly to the left.

The **ferry** crossed the Ribble into Grimsargh-with-Brockholes, where lanes led to Preston, Ribbleton and Grimsargh. Two ferrymen were serving the 'Sablesbury bote' in 1379, and it was in regular use until the construction of Preston New Road and the Ha'penny Bridge.

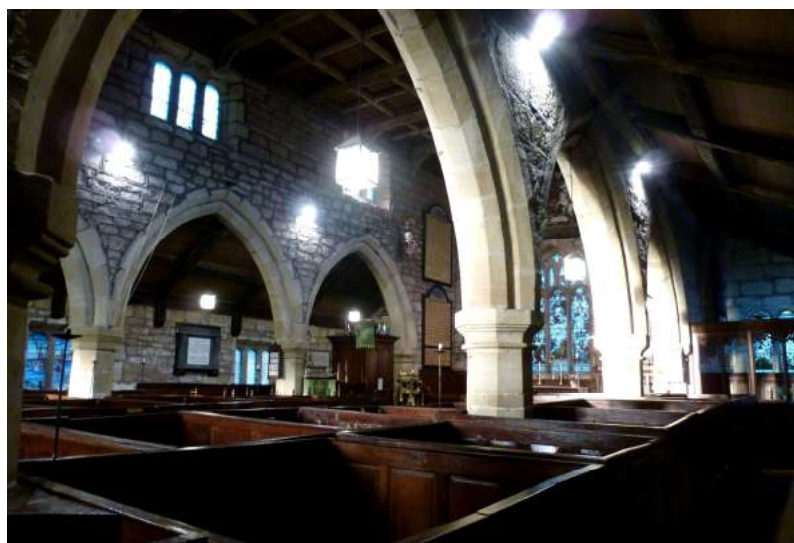


A left turn at the four cottages in Church Gates takes you to the **12th century church** of St. Leonard-the-Less.

(Legend has it that the Ribble valley was dedicated to St. Leonard, which may explain the string of churches named for him along its length).

The cottages in Church Gates

In 1612, some of the alleged evil deeds of the '**famous Sablesbury witches**' were carried out in the churchyard and at the boat house. But fortunately at their trial, the Judge of Assize at Lancaster recognised perjury when he heard it, and all three women were acquitted.



There are a number of interesting features at the Parish Church, including the funerary armour of Sir Thomas Southworth (1497-1546), and a full set of box pews.

Three R.C. priests are interred in the burial plot below the Lower Hall pew, and there is a witch's grave in the churchyard.

The box pews in the Parish Church, and the funerary armour on the nave wall.

(The church also owns a letter of 1685 which requests permission to teach a few children in the chapel, because the schoolmaster's cottage was too small and smokey).

The **lych gate** and modern access onto Potter Lane is a Memorial to the Servicemen who died in the First World War, and the church is open on Sundays for the 11.00am. Service. You may however, be lucky and catch someone working there on other days.

CONTINUE THE TRAIL ALONG POTTERS LANE, BUT KEEP ALERT, because this occupational road is also a bridleway and a cycle route.

You will pass Seed House on the left – an attractive build of the red sandstone that is typical in this particular part of Samlesbury. The stone is believed to have been quarried from the river bed.

On the right is **Seed Park**, which once had sporting rights attached. In WWII the regular army used it for their 'flash-bang' **training exercises**, (much to the delight and excitement of local children). The regulars also did their **explosives training** at the bottom of the long river bend, and when either of these events were in progress, armed guards prevented anyone from entering the area.

(If you wish to shorten the walk, the Seed Park track on the right returns you to the Five Barred Gate.)

This is a Conservation Area, and there are also SSSI's and Biological Heritage Sites close by. (Just before the Avenue a right-hand gate indicates the point at which the original line of Potter Lane curved across the field, and crossed Bezza Brook a little higher than the present bridge. The avenue was the private drive to Samlesbury Lower Hall.



WALK ALONG LOWER HALL'S VENERABLE AVENUE.

Samlesbury Lower Hall lies within a magnificent horse-shoe loop of the river, and occasional manor courts were still held there as late as 1678.

1322 was a time of civil upheaval, and in the summer of that year, **Robert the Bruce** led a raid into England, pillaging his way as far south as Samlesbury. He removed the contents of Lower Hall's armoury (including 100 lances), appropriated 18 oxen, domestic utensils and bedding, before setting fire to the place and going on to steal vestments, chalice, missal and psalter from the chapel. At least one man is known to have been killed, and the total value of stolen items in the Scots' raid came to £30 11s. 10d.. The 'sudden coming' of the Scots had taken everyone by surprise.



The avenue used to frame an attractive view of the 1620s **ruinous Lower Hall** which lies straight ahead, but it is now obscured by other trees and shrubs that have grown up near the brook.

The 1620s ruin.

During penal times, people passing by knew that if there was a lighted lamp in the top window, Mass was due to be held in **St. Chad's Mission** at the back of the house.

In time however, the encroaching Ribble rendered the domestic chapel unsafe; although in 1871 there were still traces of the altar and look-out holes, plus a clever hiding place under the

stairs. Legend tells of a priest swimming the flooded Ribble still wearing his vestments, in order to escape pursuers.

At some point in the past, the population of Samlesbury shifted away from the vicinity of the church and Lower Hall, leaving behind a **deserted village**.

CROSS BEZZA BROOK AND BEAR RIGHT INTO DEAN LANE.

The Battle of Preston (1648) began on Ribbleton Moor, and must have spilled across the Ribble into Samlesbury, because over the years 'bucketsful' of **musket balls** have been found on the riverside farms and beside Dean Lane.



Colonel Dean and his fellow Roundheads are believed to have killed several men in a skirmish along here, which may explain the **headless horseman** who reputedly rides on the darkest of nights.

Musket balls found on Dean Lane

The Preston Fight was a disaster for Charles I, and a barrow in Brockholes is said to be the massed grave of Civil War casualties on Ribbleton Moor.

AT THE FORK IN THE ROAD TAKE THE RIGHT HAND TRACK. GO OVER THE BRIDGE AND CONTINUE UP THE HILL TO WHALLEY ROAD².

Until James Fisher Armistead built this **bridge** in 1860, passers-by had to ford the brook. The coping stones were inscribed with his initials and date, but sadly workmen pushed them into the water and replaced them with iron railings.

This area is believed to be the haunt of the **Bezza Skriker**, who roams the wood on particularly wild nights.

As you walk up Dean Lane alongside Seed Park, the view over the Bowland Fells begins to open up behind, and Bezza Lane can be seen running along the ridge.

Dean Lane then passes through an area known as **Turner Green**, and in 1694 Turner Fold (a little farm behind the old Five Barred Gate), was licensed for use as a **Quaker Meeting House**.

(The footpath opposite the end of Dean Lane leads to Sowerbutts Green and Nab's Head.)

TURN RIGHT ONTO WHALLEY ROAD, AND FOLLOW THE FOOTWAY BACK TO THE FIVE BARRED GATE CAR PARK.

² The route can be lengthened here by going round the hairpin bend and along Bezza Lane. (It is arguably the most beautiful part of Samlesbury, with extensive views over the river valley). A right turn into Pickering Fold, down across the brook and up through Rigby Fold will bring you to Whalley Road, where a right-hand turn at the end of the lane takes you back to the Five Barred Gate.

When Preston New Road was opened, a **toll gate** and new hotel (which became known as the *Five Barred Gate*), were built beside the New Inn. So there was a double bar at this junction, and the new road created a very dangerous corner. At least one person is known to have been killed as they stepped out of the pub door.



The thatched building in this photograph (c1870) was called the *New Inn*, and may have been in existence before the Walton-le-Dale /Mellor Brook road was **turnpiked in 1754**. (After Preston New Road cut across it, the two sections of the road became known as *Cuerdale Lane* and *Myerscough Smithy Road* respectively.)

The building of the aerodrome for English Electric's military aircraft factory at the beginning of WWII, necessitated both a widening and a re-alignment of the old Myerscough Smithy Road. It was then renamed Whalley Road.

Samlesbury's **War Memorial Hall** (erected in 1923 in memory of Servicemen who lost their lives in WWI), lies on the Cuerdale Lane section of the old turnpike road.



The site was once occupied by a small hamlet called **Yew Trees**, and was the birthplace of **William Billington** in 1825. Although William was born into poverty when Preston New Road was being built, he became a cotton operative, poet, teacher, writer, and social commentator on life in 19th century Blackburn and Samlesbury.



We hope you have enjoyed the walk, found it to be informative, and have a safe journey home.

Samlesbury and Cuerdale Parish Council.

