

Book review: River Calder

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Tucked away in the well-trodden Lancashire countryside near Burnley is the mysteriously named Valley of the Goblins.

The real name of this wild, isolated and beautiful spot is Thursden, part of a popular walking route which follows the River Calder. 'Thurses' were supernatural goblins or poltergeists in the Middle Ages and locals believed that one of their last haunts was the Thursden Valley. The ancients, many of whom were buried in this uncompromising place, also believed that the Norse god Thor lived here and created thunder by banging his giant hammer against the rocks below Rieve Edge.

Within the valley is a stream which eventually becomes the River Calder, the shortest in England and one of three rivers (the others being the Ribble and Hodder) which meet in Mitton. The Calder was once described as 'the Cinderella' of the trio because of its industrial past but it has been undergoing something of a renaissance.

The fish are coming back, over a million trees have been planted in the nearby moorland cloughs, abandoned coal mines no longer discharge into local streams and the Ribble Rivers Trust is working hard to improve the waters and to celebrate a new era for this rich and [historic](#) area, Burnley Borough Councillor and Burnley Civic Society chairman Roger Frost has collaborated with Ian Thompson and Victoria Dewhurst on this fully illustrated guide.

The river passes through Holme Chapel, Walk Mill, Burnley, Padiham, Altham and Whalley before joining the Ribble near Great Mitton. It lies in the shadow of brooding Pendle Hill and its name essentially means 'fast-flowing water.' And the Calder can certainly be perilous. The Calder Valley has one of the highest rainfalls in England and when the river is in spate as a result of sudden and heavy rainfall, it quickly gathers momentum and becomes a threat to anyone in its path.

The land around the river is made up mainly of clay – glacial in origin – making it difficult to plough and, until the invention of tarmac, was responsible for the area having some of the country's worst and most dangerous roads.

At Whalley, the Calder passes the famous ruins of the town's 14th-century Cistercian abbey and is crossed by the listed 48-span railway viaduct built between 1846 and 1850. The river Calder has been hugely important throughout the history of this area of Lancashire and has a fascinating past which includes battles in the Dark Ages, the invention of bottled beer, the Pendle witches, the Industrial Revolution and much more.

This informative and entertaining guide includes pictorial 'stop-offs' at scenic Cliviger Gorge, Towneley Park, Pendle Hill, the [historic](#) village of Wycoller, Pendle Heritage Centre in Barrowford Park and Gawthorpe Hall, home of the Shuttleworth family.

Don't miss the journey to a hidden gem of the English landscape...
(Amberley, paperback, £14.99)

Authors: Roger Frost, Ian Thompson and Victoria Dewhurst

