

*The*  
TOLKIEN  
*Trail*

*“Not all those who  
wander are lost”*

– The Lord of the Rings

CHRISTIAN HERITAGE CENTRE  
AT STONYHURST



*Tolkien and Stonyhurst*

J.R.R.Tolkien was not the first visitor to have been inspired by the beautiful Ribble Valley countryside that surrounds Stonyhurst. Many who have studied or worked there have been captivated by its story – endurance and heroism in the face of seemingly impossible odds; the endless search for what truly matters, rather than the ephemeral or trivial; and the discovery of “the little way” as the path to maturity and character.

Professor Tolkien spent time at Stonyhurst. In his writing he reflected these themes and incorporated names and descriptions of landscapes which bear great similarity to places around Stonyhurst.

The author of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* – one of the world’s top ten best-selling books – was a regular visitor to this beautiful part of Lancashire, the Sacred County, when one of his sons, Michael, was a teacher at the college, and another, John, trained there for the priesthood (while the English College in Rome was closed during the Second World War). Tolkien’s name appears in the college visitors’ book many times, along with those of his wife, daughter and sons.

This walk, produced by the Christian Heritage Centre at Stonyhurst

and based on the route created in conjunction with Ribble Valley Borough Council, focuses on Tolkien’s Catholic faith and touches both on the places that would have been familiar to him and on those that may resonate with people who know his books.

The trail enables walkers to experience some of the stunning local landscape that, during Tolkien’s visits, would have inspired him in his stories of hobbits – the people of the Shire – and their great battles.

Appropriately enough, the village of Hurst Green boasts its own Shire Lane while Ribblesdale and Rivedale seem, at times, interchangeable. The verdant countryside is dominated by the dark shape of Pendle Hill which bears a striking resemblance to Mordor.

Mark Thompson, Editor of the *New York Times*, said of the area around Stonyhurst, “you have a feeling that this is a special, unspoilt place. It’s amazing”.

**We hope you enjoy the walk!**

## CHRISTIAN HERITAGE CENTRE AT STONYHURST



The Christian Heritage Centre at Stonyhurst works to create greater accessibility to the historic Stonyhurst Collections and Libraries (and their story), and in Theodore House (developed in the abandoned ruined mill) to run education and retreat programmes, and to facilitate study.

The Stonyhurst collection is the oldest surviving museum collection in the English-speaking world, dating its first acquisition to 1609. It is the collection of a “forgotten ancient British university”. It embodies the Jesuit philosophy encapsulated in the phrase “the world is our house” – outward-looking, respectful of other cultures, and intrinsically inclusive – that made the Jesuits keepers of memory and preservers of culture.

# Tolkien and religion

Since 1954, 150 million copies of *The Lord of the Rings* have influenced vast numbers of readers. Less well known was the contribution Tolkien made in 1966 to the Jerusalem Bible – translating the little Book of Jonah. With his friend C.S. Lewis and the other “Inklings”, Tolkien used his amazing skills as a storyteller to open our eyes to the story that matters most.

Tolkien attended Mass in the now beautifully restored church of St Peter, in the grounds of Stonyhurst. He cultivated his great love of the Blessed Sacrament and nurtured his belief by regularly receiving Holy Communion: “I fell in love with the Blessed Sacrament from the beginning and by the mercy of God never have fallen out again”. The Blessed Sacrament appears in *The Lord of the Rings* as the lembas, the mystical bread - the bread of angels - which both nourishes and heals. Lembas, we are told, “had a potency that increased as travellers relied on it alone, and did not mingle it with other goods. It fed the will, and it gave strength to endure”.

As well as the Blessed Sacrament, Tolkien had a great devotion to Mary, the Mother of God. This began with the premature death of his own mother



and he said, “I attribute whatever there is of beauty and goodness in my work to the Holy Mother of God”. He also said, “the Incarnation of God is an infinitely greater thing than anything I would dare to write”.

Tolkien tells us that: “*The Lord of The Rings* is of course a fundamentally religious and Catholic work, unconsciously at first, but consciously in the revision”. Elsewhere he states “I am a Christian (which can be deduced from my stories), and in fact a Roman Catholic”. In 1958 he wrote that *The Lord of the Rings* is “a tale, which is built on or out of certain ‘religious’ ideas, but is not an allegory of them”.

Perhaps the most striking demonstration of Tolkien’s deep spirituality is an exchange he had with a stranger who said “Of course, you don’t suppose, do you, that you wrote all that book yourself?” to which Tolkien replied “No, I don’t suppose so any longer”.

# The Trail

*“Stick to the forest-track, keep your spirits up, hope for the best, and with a tremendous slice of luck you may come out one day and see the Long Marshes lying below you, and beyond them, high in the East, the Lonely Mountain where dear old Smaug lives, though I hope he is not expecting you.”*

*Gandalf the Grey*

1

With your back to the main Whalley Road, walk along Warren Fold. Just beyond the last of the houses, go over a stile - you will see the domed turrets of Stonyhurst College straight ahead of you. Follow the wall on your left, pass through a gateway and turn sharp right. Walk across the field, passing a lone tree, to reach the fence on the other side.

2

Don't go through the gate, but turn right and follow the fence, heading towards the red brick cricket pavilion. Go through a kissing gate and continue to follow the field boundary. After passing through another kissing gate, follow the path downhill and over the stream. Climb uphill with Fox Fall Wood on your left.

3

As the gradient levels, bear right across the narrow paddock to follow the iron fence to the corner. Go through the gate in the corner and turn right, passing the current observatory for the college. A quick detour down the road on your left would take you past Theodore House and to St Peter's Church. Return to the route and follow the tarmac track downhill towards Hall Barn Farm.

4

Turn left before the gate and go through a wooden gate, following the line of the farm buildings. There is a magnificent view of Stonyhurst College and the pavilions to your left. You will shortly emerge on to a track. Keep going straight ahead, following the hedge. To your left is St Mary's Hall, formerly a seminary. Across the playing fields to your right is the distinctive profile of Pendle Hill, with - a little to its left - Clitheroe Castle.

5

When you reach Woodfields, cross the road, bearing slightly to the left and turn down the lane between the houses. The lane soon becomes a rough track and swings to the left. Turn right and go over the wooden stile, then follow the edge of the field alongside Over Hacking Wood. Near the corner, turn left over a stile, then right to descend a stepped path.

6

Cross the bridge over the stream and follow the path which forks to the right towards the River Hodder. Just before reaching the river, turn right over another bridge and climb steadily uphill. Passing Hodder Place on your right, the path now descends towards the river. Herons can be seen along this stretch of river. Go through the stile at the bottom of the hill to emerge from the woodland on to a wide, surfaced track. You will now follow the river as it curves gently round to the right.

7

Where the track meets the main road at Lower Hodder Bridge, cross over, pausing to admire Cromwell's Bridge just a little downstream. Turn right along the footway and follow the road uphill. Opposite the junction, go left over a stile and bear slightly left across the field to another stile in the fence opposite. Go over the stile and walk straight uphill, crossing another stile before the brow. Bear slightly right across the field, passing through a kissing gate and heading towards the hedge to the left of the farm buildings.



Stonyhurst Co

Observatories



1

Shireburn  
Arms Hotel



Hodder Place

St Mary's Hall

College

Hall Barn Farm

Cromwell's Bridge

Winckley Hall

Winckley Hall Farm

Stone Cros

Jumbles Farm

Aqueduct

Hacking Hall

6

5

7

3

4

8

2

9

11

10

12

8

Go through the kissing gate and turn left along the tarmac track, which drops steadily downhill. Where the track levels, go straight ahead, through the gate and into Winckley Hall Farmyard. Turn right, go through the yard, then turn left, passing a brick wall on the left to reach a gate. Go through the stile and turn immediately right along a gravel track, with the River Hodder again on your left.

9

Where the Hodder joins the River Ribble, take the path to the left, around the gate, to reach a stile by a bench. Go over the stile and turn left to follow a wide track alongside the Ribble. After about 1km, the Ribble is joined from the left by the River Calder, with Hacking Hall on the opposite bank.

10

Continue to follow the bank of the Ribble until the path narrows near a stone building on the right. Go through a gate on to a track and over a stile, heading towards Jumbles Farm. Follow the track around to the left to pick up the line of the river again. Where the track turns right, keep straight on alongside the Ribble. As you walk you will see a stone cross on the hillside to your right.

11

Where the cross disappears from view, go over a stile, across a gravel surface, then over another stile to continue alongside the river. Ahead of you is a graceful three-arched aqueduct. When you reach the aqueduct, go over the stile to its right, bearing slightly right across the field and through another stile on the edge of a wood. Cross the wooden bridge and climb the stepped path to another stile. Go over this stile and walk straight ahead, following the fence on the left.

Where the fence turns sharply left, keep straight on downhill. Cross two bridges and another stile, then turn slightly to the left. You should now be walking uphill along a low ridge with streams on either side. After about 200m, cross the stream on the right and turn left to continue uphill, following the line of the field boundary on the left. At the top of the field, go over a stone stile in the left corner and pass through the car park of the Shireburn Arms Hotel. Cross the road to return to the start of the walk.





## *The Observatories*

The first observatory at Stonyhurst was begun in 1838 and in 1868 the Dome Observatory was completed. This observatory houses a larger telescope than the original building and is still in use by the students. The Society of Jesus has a long history in cosmology. They took

astronomical instruments to China and were instrumental in the founding of the Vatican observatory, which they continue to run to this day.

## *Theodore House*

Part of the Christian Heritage Centre, Theodore House is a retreat, study and leadership centre where visitors can deepen their experience of the extensive collection of artefacts held at Stonyhurst - precious vestments, silver, manuscripts and relics rescued during the turmoil of the English Reformation and sent to the college to be held in trust on behalf of the Catholic community. The collection is of critical importance for the history of faith and culture in England from the Middle Ages onwards. Theodore House is a converted 19th century mill that used to provide wheat for the college and had kennels of hunting dogs that provided inspiration for the then pupil Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. The site later fell into a state of disrepair and has been indefinitely leased by the college to the Christian Heritage Centre for the annual rent of one loaf of bread and six altar candles.

## *St Peter's Church*

St Peter's is a small version of King's College Chapel at Cambridge and is used jointly by the parish and Stonyhurst College. One of the first churches to be built after Catholic emancipation in 1829, it is an important example of church architecture in the Gothic Revival Perpendicular style. Tolkien spent time in St Peter's church and had a particular devotion to the Blessed Sacrament,

describing it as “the one great thing to love on earth” and in which “you will find romance, glory, honour, fidelity and the true way of all your loves on earth, and more than that...eternal endurance which every man’s heart desires”. Devotion to the Eucharist remains at St Peter’s with Blessed Sacrament processions and exposition.

## *Hall Barn Farm*

The Barn, which stands alongside the path, is at least in part probably late medieval. Until as late as the 1820s, a number of 14th and 15th century buildings survived at Stonyhurst. It is possible that the barn dates from the same period, as the roof is supported on five massive oak cruck frames. This building technique fell out of favour in the 16th century due to a shortage of timber.

## *Garden Pavilions*

The two pavilions, with their elegant curving rooves, were added to Stonyhurst – along with a formal walled garden – by Sir Nicholas Shireburn in the late 17th century. By this point, conditions for Catholics had improved, however in the early 1600s the Shireburn family was being persecuted for being Catholic, which had halted building work at Stonyhurst. The octagonal building beyond (now used as a tea room) is the old observatory of 1838 (see above).

“It’s a dangerous business, Frodo, going out of your door” – Frodo, quoting Bilbo.

“We come to it at last...the great battle of our time” – Gandalf.

## *Pendle Hill*

Pendle Hill dominates the south eastern flank of the Ribble Valley and is the highest hill in Lancashire at 557m (1860ft). Clitheroe Castle was built in the 12th century on the rocky outcrop overlooking the crossing of the Ribble at Edisford. Pendle Hill is famous for its association with witches, sorcery and black magic in the 16th century. Inspiration here for Mordor, Middle-earth’s Misty Mountains and The Lonely Mountain?

## *Woodfields and New Lodge*

The houses around Woodfields are owned by Stonyhurst College and provide accommodation for staff. J.R.R. Tolkien stayed at nearby New Lodge when he visited his son John at St Mary's Hall. At that time, it was a seminary for the English College evacuated from Rome. His other son Michael later lived at Woodfields and planted a copse in his father's memory following J.R.R. Tolkien's death in 1973. It was Michael that J.R.R. Tolkien told that "the only cure for sagging or fainting faith is Communion... frequency is of the highest effect".

## *River Hodder*

The Hodder marks the historic county boundary between Lancashire (this side) and Yorkshire (far side). Much of the land in the Hodder Valley further to the north is owned by the Queen as the Duke of Lancaster. The river may have been Tolkien's inspiration for the two rivers that had to be crossed before getting to Mordor.

## *Hodder Place*

This impressive building dates back to 1780, when it was the home of a cotton mill owner. All traces of the mill, on the river bank below the

house, have now disappeared. The building was greatly extended by the Jesuits in the nineteenth century when it was used as a novitiate and then as a preparatory school until its closure in 1971. It has since been divided into privately owned houses and flats. You may notice in Hodder Place a wooden sculpture of Gandalf.

## *Cromwell's Bridge*

Also known as Devil's Bridge, the packhorse bridge across the Hodder was built by Sir Richard Shireburn in 1562, replacing a wooden bridge dating from at least 1331. Legend says that it was used by Oliver Cromwell during his march from Skipton to intercept the Royalists at the Battle of Preston in 1648. It is far more likely that he would have crossed the river at Higher Hodder Bridge. Cromwell spent the night at Stonyhurst and refused to sleep in a "Catholic bed", preferring to rest on a table which is still in the main refectory of the college.

## *Winckley Hall Farm*

In the 12th century, Winckley was part of the estates of the Knights Hospitaller, now better known as the Order of Malta – a Catholic order with a 900-year history of defending the faith and helping the

poor and the sick. By the early 13th century, Winckley had been granted to John de Winkley. John supported Thomas Earl of Lancaster in his revolt against Edward II in 1318. Although Thomas was executed for treason, John Winkley was pardoned. Little of the early house survives. As well as Winckley, the Knights owned the site of St Saviour's Chapel in Stydd, where there is an unmarked grave in which St Margaret Clitherow is thought to have been buried by recusant Catholics.

"Courage is found in unlikely places"  
– Gildor.

## *Hacking Hall*

The de Hacking family occupied this site from at least 1200, until it passed by marriage to the Shuttleworth family in the 14th century. The present house was built in 1607 by Sir Thomas Walmsley of Dunkenhalgh, the noted circuit judge, who had married the heiress Anne Shuttleworth. Just upstream of the hall was the ferry service, which operated until the 1950s. The ferryman's hut and the ferry itself are on display at Clitheroe Castle Museum. Perhaps Tolkien drew inspiration from here for the Bucklebury Ferry in *The Lord of the Rings*.

## *The Stone Cross*

The base of the cross dates to the early Christian period and was originally sited to the north of Cross Gills Farm. It was moved to its present position in 1833 by the Rector of Stonyhurst. At the same time a new shaft and arms were cut to surmount the pedestal.

## *The Aqueduct*

The graceful stone aqueduct was constructed in the 1880s by the Blackburn Corporation. It originally carried water from Whitewell via an underground pipeline.

## *The Shireburn Arms Hotel*

Not far from the aqueduct, another form of liquid can be found at the Shireburn Arms Hotel! And on completion of the Tolkien Trail, where better to quench your thirst than a pub named after the Catholic family who built Stonyhurst and owned the estate in the 16th and 17th centuries. With Shire Lane nearby and many other landmarks named after the Shireburn family, it is little wonder that Tolkien's hobbits live where they do.

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