

Bridge of the Month 152, August 2023

Dry stone bridge, Duddon Valley

A summer holiday trip took us to the Lake District, and in particular the wonderful Duddon Valley, a place as special to me and Heather as it was to Bill and Sue, who visited from Leeds University to stay at the Dale Head hut. Those trips were organised by [Don Robinson](#), a force of nature who they talked about with great affection. Some might still recognise the DR Climbing Walls brand, as Don was central to the rise of indoor climbing.

On this trip we were invited by Heather's sister and family to join them at Low Hall, some way south down the valley. Some fine walks crossed numerous candidate bridges of the month. One little delight directly connected with Low Hall itself can't be overlooked.

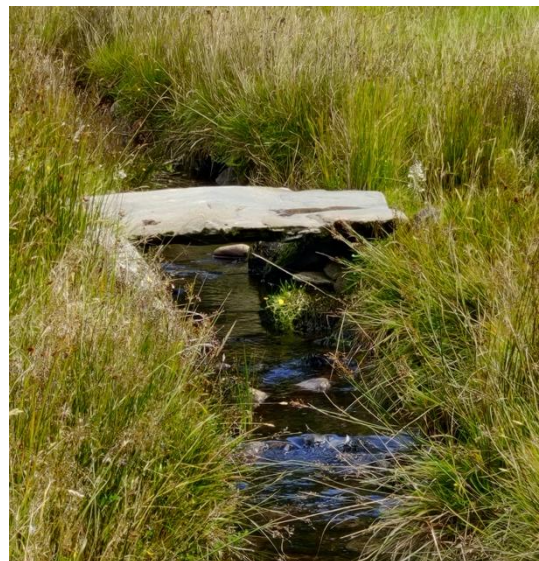
At the far corner of the field next to the house, [a dry stone arch](#) stands across a small brook (that surprisingly, given its size, seems to have a name: Black Sike).



Low Hall is the white house in the distance – the setting is truly delightful. The route over this bridge and up the first slope is referred to by frequent visitors as “the gin and tonic walk”.

If you really don't trust the arch – on the way out with a full glass, or perhaps on the way back with an empty one – there is a simpler affair a few metres upstream, but where's the fun in that?

There is a slight feeling of mobility when crossing the arch, which I think has more to do with the loose stones making up the wearing surface than the arch itself, which has already stood a considerable test of time, as we'll see.



Some closer views will be of interest to bridge and moss aficionados alike.



It seems that the bridge was built by the owners of the house, and recently celebrated its 30th anniversary. It could perfectly well last another 30, and comfortably outlast all the RAAC of the same era.



Dry stone bridge. People often ask about the hump-back bridge over the Black Sike at the foot of the fell. It was built by David Lascelles and James Hesketh-Prichard in 1992 as part of a scientific exercise to create a “dry” self-supporting stone arch. It has survived because, as an architect friend told us, “the stones cannot fall because they have nowhere to go.”



To the right are three happy cousins at the start of what turned out to be a slightly epic day, taking in a truly excellent lunch at the Blacksmith’s in Broughton Mills.

Since this is already nearly a month late, and really the bridge speaks for itself, I’ll stop there.