

## Every witch way

Mark Davidson

Lancashire, 1612. Ten people are hung as witches. Evidence of their guilt is based solely on local gossip. Beggars at worst, they were no more able to cast spells than anyone else.

The centrepiece of the legend and stories is Pendle Hill; 1,831 feet above sea level. Each Halloween, large numbers of locals make their way to the top wearing fancy dress.

Pendle Heritage Centre in the village of Barrowford is a good place to learn about the history. Open all the year round, with full accessibility, it incorporates a museum, gift shop, tea-room and tourist information.

The parish church at Newchurch has the Eye of God carved on the bell tower, thought by locals at the time to



MARK DAVIDSON

protect them from evil. Within the graveyard is the burial site of the Nutter family, known locally as the 'Witches Grave'. Within the village there is a famous souvenir shop called Witches Galore. Sitting outside, keeping guard are three ugly ladies dressed as witches. Incidentally, the residence of Alice

Nutter was the old hall at Roughlee, known locally as 'Witches Hall'.

The 13th century abbey at Whalley was portrayed in the 19th century novel by Harrison Ainsworth, *The Lancashire Witches*. Although parts of the grounds may be difficult to access by disabled visitors, the information centre is fully accessible.

Travelling further afield you can make your way to Lancaster Castle where the trials of the accused took place, and the Golden Lion pub where they were allowed a last drink on the way to the gallows.

There is even a bus service with a difference, the Witch Way. Travel from Colne to Manchester on buses each named after one of the witches. These are fully accessible for those in wheelchairs. ■