

The Passing of the River Ribble

By the time the Ribble has got to Dover Lane, it has run half of its length. It is still young and sprinkling with enthusiasm as it tumbles down banks, cuts through steep fields and slips through the shade of old oak trees. It is tea coloured, full of life and smells earthy. It wraps itself around a leg of a preying heron and tinkles under wings of mayflies, dragonflies, butterflies and bumblebees. It searches for water boatmen in quiet corners and skimming whirligig beetles as it begins to gush down Dunford Road. It passes walls that it cannot penetrate which force it in a direction that it cannot choose for itself.

The Ribble inevitably finds itself at the Nook. It becomes quiet, unexpectedly nervous of what lies ahead. Suddenly, it is plunged into darkness and fear builds as it wants to stop still and assess the threat. But the mass behind it compels the Ribble forward. Fumbling about underground it abruptly meets itself. But this is not itself. It is colder, self-assured and resilient. The juvenile Ribble immediately wants to rebel against this water. It does not want to socialise and share but it is vulnerable for it has run into the Holme. The clash commences. Their protests and struggle continue as they emerge into daylight, gasping for air. The Picturedrome puts the water centre stage, casting a spotlight to the crashing and beating of the Holme and the Ribble as they fight to win the title. The rivers foam at the mouth and roar. They rock and roll over the boulders and command attention from people walking from the bus to The Bridge.

It is all soon over. The rivers are now intermingled and soothed. The earlier outbursts are resolved, and recognition quickly reached about the fact that two have become one. The Ribble has conceded to the Holme. This new river familiarises itself with the busy-ness of its environment and sighs as it accommodates the alien plastic, bottles and cans. It looks up at people on foot bridges while advancing underneath being gently pushed by its greater blended body.

At that moment the river is punctured by webbed feet as multi-coloured ducks and ducklings claim their right to swim and glide on the river's surface. The Holme duly delivers them to the bank where little red wellingtons excitedly stamp on the sides and small hands offer seeds and oats to the un-hungry birds. They are accompanied by guiding larger hands belonging to owners who reminisce when they brought bread. Other people watch over this passage, content to observe, appreciate and exhale.

The Holme is coming of age now and prepares for the journey ahead. It butts up against supermarkets and catches balls from sporting fields. It has accepted its course, realising its role to be a source of life and adapt around the wild and unnatural. The river has made its bed. It knows for its own existence that it must swell and be swallowed.

Lucy