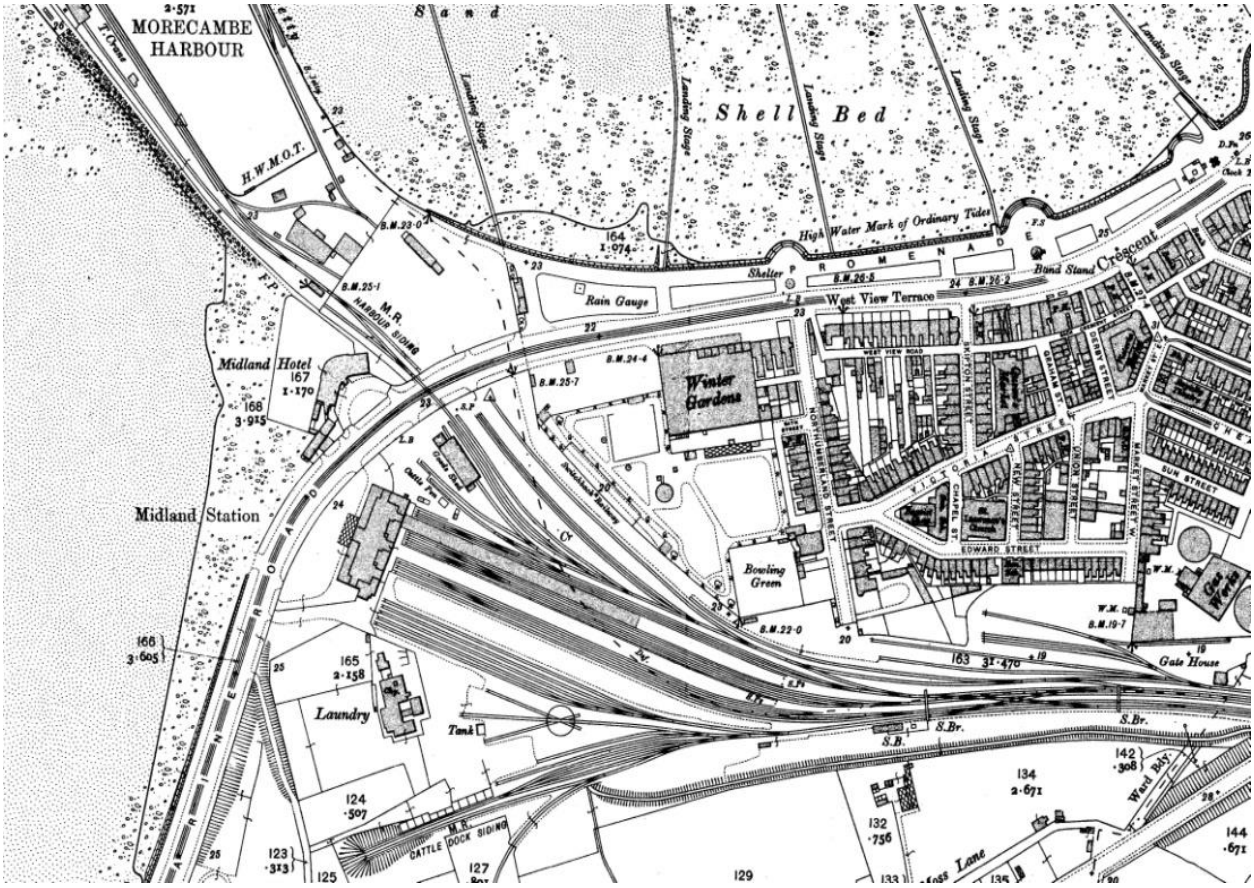


Lancaster Civic Vision

Celebrating our Heritage – Enhancing our Environment – Shaping our Future

MORECAMBE – THE STATION TO THE SEA

Lancaster Civic Vision Guide 13



Central Morecambe, 1913 (Ordnance Survey)

The railway

Let us start our walk at the current Morecambe railway station on Central Drive (for satnav use LA4 4DE) and travel west for 2/3mile (1.1 km) to the end of the Stone Jetty and the sea, passing on our way the Midland Hotel.

It was the arrival of the railway from Lancaster in 1848 and from Yorkshire in 1850 that propelled Poulton-le-Sands (it officially became Morecambe, after the Bay, in 1889) from

a fishing village with some visitors into the major resort it soon became. Initially the prize for the railway was not tourists but cattle, goods and ferry passengers to Ireland, which is why the tracks were extended seawards, the stone and wooden jetties being built by the railway companies to create by 1853 a large but very tidal port.

The opening of the bigger and deeper Heysham Harbour in 1904 took that freight traffic away. But Promenade Station (1907) still handled the tourists flocking in by train, particularly on Bank Holidays, Wakes Weeks and summer weekends. So the station had extensive carriage sidings (see the map above), where the arriving trains could be re-formed for the return journey.

When, after the mid-1960s, the tourists stopped coming by train or coming at all, the station area became far too big. Promenade Station was replaced in 1994 by the much smaller present one and the sidings were re-developed. A new road (a continuation of Central Drive) was built from the south end of Northumberland Street to Marine Road. The area south of the main tracks became a retail area with Morrisons, Next and Homebase. Several parking areas were set up for the car-based visitors.

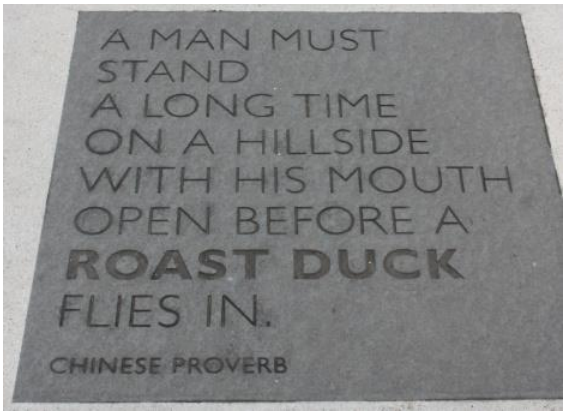
Our route

Leave the railway station, turn left, pass the roundabout with the large gannet statues and use the zebra crossing over Central Drive. Walk past the bus shelter on your left and pick up the Flock of Words, a straight tree-lined concrete footpath heading directly towards the Midland Hotel and the sea. Walk along it.

Public art

There has been a major scheme of public art in Morecambe – the TERN Project. It started in a small way in 1994 and 2008 saw the unveiling of 24 pieces of artwork around the town, many of which you will pass on this walk. Russell Coleman and Gordon Young were the principal artists. The theme is a celebration of the diverse bird life of Morecambe Bay in stone and metal sculptures, poetry, mosaics and inserts in the pavement.





The Flock of Words (2003) is the path parallel to Central Drive. It contains many sections of poems and sayings about birds, often amusing. Enjoy reading them as you wander towards the Promenade. On your left is Morecambe Market.

On Marine Road on your left is the former Midland Railway station, Promenade Station. It now houses the Visitor Information Centre, The Platform and family attractions.

Walk across Marine Road towards the Midland Hotel. The first hotel on this site was the North Western Hotel (1848), from the railway company of that name, and designed by E.G. Paley of the notable Lancaster architectural practice. This was replaced in 1933 by the current building, named after the Midland Railway. Oliver Hill followed Paley's curved plan but used a sleek Modernist style with clean lines and white render.

Inside, fashionable artists helped decorate the hotel – sculptures and frescoes by Eric Gill and Eric Ravilious and Marion Dorn's carpet and mosaic. It was chic and glamorous, with a clientele to match. As the resort declined, so did the Midland Hotel and by the 1980s it was a sad sight.

A period of closure and dereliction was ended when Urban Splash bought it in 2003 and, after major and sensitive refurbishment, it reopened in 2008. It is well worth visiting this Grade II*-listed building, an Art Deco jewel, which is run by English Lake Hotels.

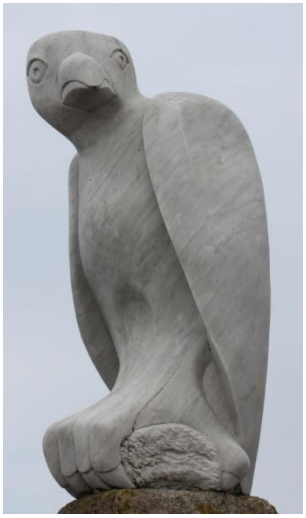
Continuing the walk, pass around either side of the Midland Hotel and set off along the Stone Jetty towards the sea. The area north of the Midland Hotel has had many leisure uses – it had the 1930s Super Swimming Stadium (closed in 1975) and the site of the Miss Great Britain beauty contest, a bandstand, an indoor swimming pool then events venue, and Marineland (1964–90) with performing dolphins. Today there is the RNLI lifeboat station. The wider site may become Eden North, a new tourist attraction for Morecambe.

The Stone Jetty started as a ferry harbour and between 1905 and 1931 it was Ward's ship-breaking yard. Tours of the yard were very popular, but this did not fit comfortably with Morecambe's motto – Beauty Surrounds, Health Abounds – and some people welcomed Ward's closure.

The rest of the walk along the Stone Jetty – refurbished after 1992 and then extended seawards for extra flood defence – displays many clever and delightful bird-themed sculptures and carvings. Admire the views.



The Midland Hotel







The Stone Jetty



Tern artwork at the start of the Stone Jetty, Morecambe - photo by Ian Greene

Here are some other guides in this series that may be of interest:

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Reading

Bingham RK 1990 *The Last Resort? The Flow and Ebb of Morecambe.* Milnthorpe: Cicerone Press

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