Lancaster Civic Vision

Celebrating our Heritage – Enhancing our Environment – Shaping our Future

LUNE BRIDGES WALKS, LANCASTER

Lancaster Civic Society Vision 22





Skerton Bridge (left) Millennium Bridge (right)

There are many lovely walks along the River Lune through Lancaster. On foot or by bike, the walks vary by season, the tide and river level. You can walk on both sides of the Lune, in clockwise or anticlockwise circles, criss-crossing by the five bridges in whatever combination you wish, enjoying shorter or longer routes.

But do remember that the Lune is fast flowing and deep.

The riverside paths are all nearly level and paved except for a short section approaching the Lune Aqueduct from the north bank. The bridges are all easy to access except for Carlisle

Bridge – a long, steep flight of steps from either bank. The side with Lancaster is the "south bank" and the other side (with Halton and Skerton) is the "north bank".

Along the river you will likely see a wealth of plants and trees depending on the season and many birds of the sea, riverbank and meadow. On the river itself look out for fishermen, rowers and jet-skiers. There are now five bridges across the Lune in Lancaster. They are all spectacular and innovative in design and engineering.

Lune Aqueduct

To reach Kendal, the Lancaster Canal had to cross the Lune at a high level (see Guide 39 *River Lune and Lancaster Canal*). Alexander Stevens and Son built this 664-foot aqueduct designed by John Rennie and it opened in 1797. The five, massive, semi-circular arches transfer the weight down to the piers with their sharply pointed cutwaters to reduce the pressure from the Lune. The pathway across offers wonderful views to Lancaster Castle. Upstream look for the new M6 bridge (opened in 2016) and beyond it the first M6 bridge (1960), a reinforced-concrete arch.

Skerton Bridge

Built in 1783–8 to replace a narrow medieval bridge with steep approach roads, it became the main road crossing of the Lune and still carries all the traffic from Morecambe and the north (A6). At its southern end is the old toll house. The design by Thomas Harrison is both classical and modern. The inspiration may have been a Roman bridge in Rimini – the Doric pilasters and balustrades are classical. Yet the five shallow elliptical arches (giving a flat road surface) were cutting-edge eighteenth-century design. Use the traffic lights or underpasses to cross this busy road.

Greyhound Bridge

This was originally the railway bridge to Poulton-le-Sands, now Morecambe. When built in 1848 it was of timber construction. It was reworked in wrought iron in 1864, rebuilt with circular steel caissons in 1911 and converted in 1972 for road traffic to Morecambe and the north-bound A6. There is a pavement only on the south side. The graceful curve of the nine spans is very distinctive. The south-bank access is from the cycle and footpath from Skerton Bridge. The north-bank access is from the riverside streets of Skerton and the path to Carlisle Bridge.

Millennium Bridge

Opened in 2001, this cycleway and footpath is striking and innovative. The two, 40-metre masts use cables to support the curving box-girder deck. On the south bank there is a higher exit to the cycleway along the south bank of the Lune and a lower exit to St George's Quay and Carlisle Bridge. The northern access is from the path to Carlisle Bridge and from the riverside streets of Skerton.

Mediaeval bridge

Finally removed completely in 1846, it was a four-arched road bridge, in timber then stone, downstream of Millennium Bridge and the only crossing before Skerton Bridge.

Carlisle Bridge

Opened in 1846, it carries the main west-coast railway line to Scotland. The two massive piers are original with rusticated stone facing, but the timber deck-spans were replaced by wrought-iron in 1866 and by the current steel girders and concrete deck in 1963. The footpath parallels the tracks which were electrified in 1974. The high clearance allowed trading vessels to reach the Lancaster warehouses. It gives excellent views across Lancaster (see also Guide 20 *Railways around Lancaster and Carnforth*).

Distance

Lune Aqueduct to Carlisle Bridge – about 3km

Routes

On the south bank, the bridges are linked by a cyclepath and footpath, with short tunnels under Greyhound and Skerton Bridges. St George's Quay leads to Carlisle Bridge.

On the north bank, Carlisle Bridge is linked to Millennium and Greyhound Bridges by a cycleway and footpath. Greyhound Bridge underpass to Skerton Bridge uses Lune Street, Albert Road and Derby Road. Skerton Bridge to Lune Aqueduct uses a riverside footpath, Halton Road, Lune Bank Gardens path from the Rowing Club and either up to Halton Road or along a tricky woodland path to the Aqueduct.

What to see

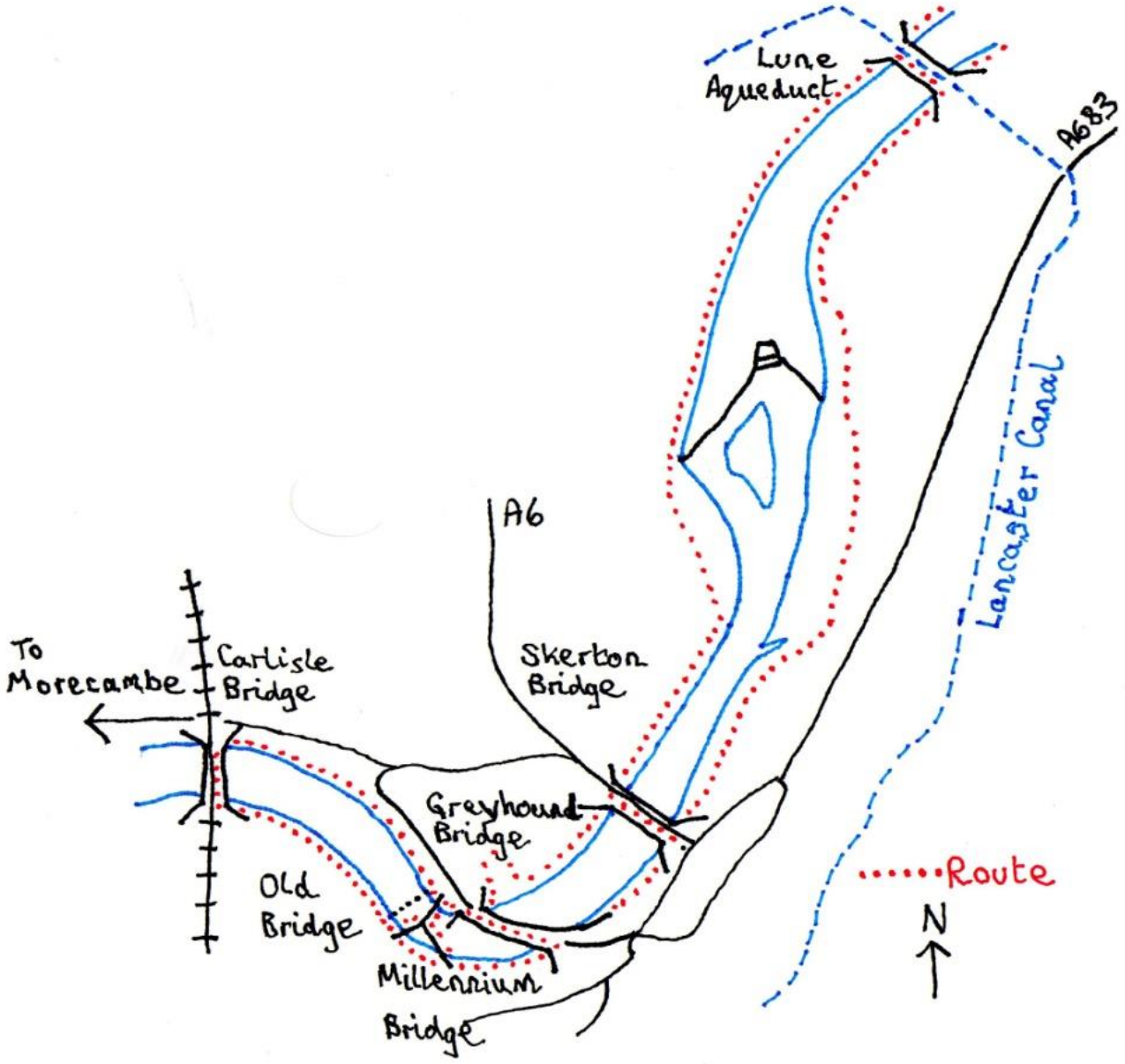
Lune Aqueduct to Skerton Bridge. *North bank.* The central section of the walk (Lune Bank Gardens) was donated to Skerton in 1904 by Lord Ashton, Lancaster's largest industrialist. *South bank.* The Caton Road Works has produced ropes, railway wagons and, in the First World War, artillery shells. There is a guide to the Works, No. 30)

Skerton Bridge to Millennium Bridge. *North bank.* You pass the terraced housing of Skerton (1878–82) and, inland, Our Lady's RC College. *South bank.* You pass the Green Ayre – successively used for shipbuilding, timber yards, a railway station and sidings, and now a park and Sainsbury's. There is a guide to Lancaster's railways (No. 20).

Millennium Bridge to Carlisle Bridge. *North bank.* Saltmarsh separates you from the river and, inland, is Ryelands House, home of Lord Ashton. *South bank.* The eighteenth-century warehouses of Lancaster's overseas trading past (now mostly flats). The Maritime Museum

in the impressive Custom House (1764) is well worth a visit. Note the new flood defence wall. The footpath along Carlisle Bridge was instituted by Lord Ashton to get workers to his factories on the south bank. See Guide No.59 for more details about St George's Quay.

Text & photos – Gordon Clark.
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Routes - not to scale