

Lancaster Civic Vision

Celebrating our Heritage – Enhancing our Environment – Shaping our Future

THE CARNFORTH IRON WORKS RAILWAY TRAIL

A short walk from the world famous "Brief Encounter" Refreshment Rooms at Carnforth Station Heritage Centre

Introduction:

Carnforth Iron Works Railway, known locally as the L'al Cheggie Line, is approximately a 3 mile flat walk. Good footwear is required, and walking on a clear day is recommended to take in the breathtaking panoramic views of Morecambe bay.

Iron Works Trail background:

Much of the history of Carnforth revolves around the railways and ironworks. Vast deposits of limestone located locally made Carnforth an ideal place for an ironworks, as limestone is a key component of the smelting process. In 1846 the Carnforth Ironworks Company established a works near the railway station.

In the same year a recession occurred in the Earl of Dudley ironworks in Worcestershire, this meant there was a surplus of workers. A number of workers moved to the ironworks and lived in the nearby company village of Dudley (now called Millhead).

In 1864 the Carnforth Haematite Company took over the works and production was vastly increased due to iron ore that was brought in by rail from the Furness Peninsula. By 1872 steel production became the main focus for the works using the new Bessemer process. By 1889 this process had failed.

Iron production continued at the works until 1929 when it eventually closed down. The site was taken over by the War department (UK) as an ordnance depot and remained as such until the 1960s

The Carnforth Iron Works Railway ran from 1866 until 1929. It followed a track from the site on Warton Road opposite the railway station, towards Silverdale and the Scout Cragg Quarry where it picked up limestone, an ingredient of the smelting process at the Iron Works. The rail track then forked off at a junction close to Cotestones farm, crossed over the Carnforth to Barrow railway line and progressed out into Morecambe Bay on a high railway track bed, This bed was laid down by the tipping of red-hot waste product from the iron works known as slag.

Please remember the men who attempted to reclaim many acres of land using the waste products of Iron and Steel making. Feel and see the awesome challenge they were attempting; and imagine the sight of the Mary Irvine Steam engine dumping red hot slag and lighting up the night sky as work continued 24 hours a day.

Enjoy arguably the best view of Morecambe Bay, the Lakeland Hills, Howgill Fells and the mountains of the Yorkshire Dales.

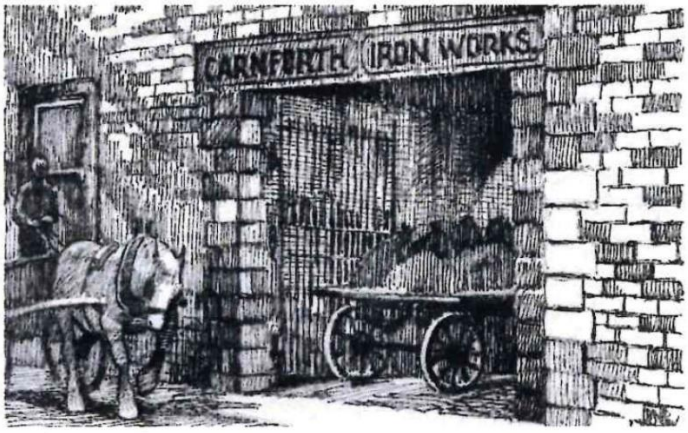
NB. The sketches included in this trail, drawn by David Walsby, attempt to show an interpretation of what you would have seen had you stood at that spot around 1900

Directions:

1 – Leave Carnforth Station through the white gates leading from the platform onto warton Road, keeping to your left.

2 – Proceed towards Warton on the footpath

In approximately 50 yards you will see the original Iron Works entrance now bricked up. The massive Iron lintel defiantly displaying the Iron Works sign. Note the worn masonry caused by years of use.



Iron Works entrance as it was originally

3 – Continue on the footpath to the railway club car park. Then looking across the road you will see the current entrance to the modern industrial warehousing complex.

Below is a drawing of the Bessemer Cottages, removed to make way for the Steel Plant on the site. They were rebuilt on Lancaster Road and renamed Hall Street. They are situated just past the petrol station on the left hand side heading towards Crag Bank.



Site of Bessemer Cottages

4 – Continue on to the railway bridge, then turn left on to Shore Road.

Note at the junction the horse trough used by the horses from the Iron Works and the railway.

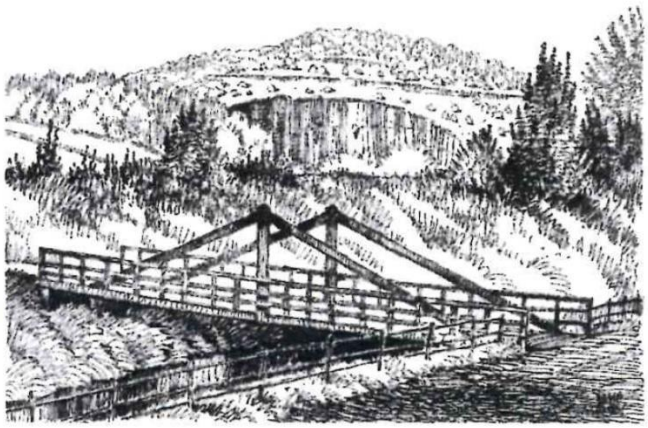


Horse trough on Shore Road

5 – Continue along Shore Road

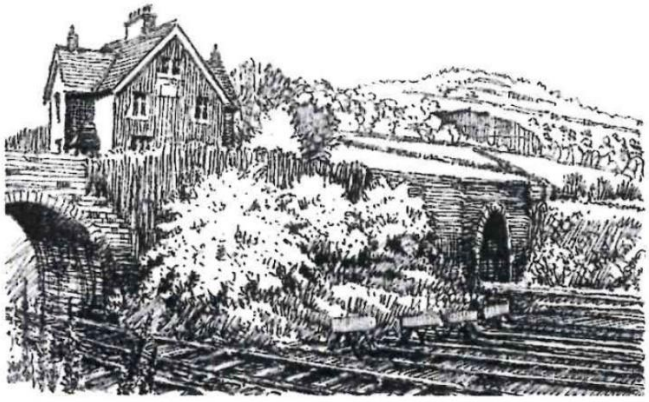
Note on your left Carnforth's oldest house Hagg Farm circa 1636.

6 – At the footbridge over the River Keer (right), continue over the footbridge and along the lane up to the 'T' junction.



Footbridge over the River Keer

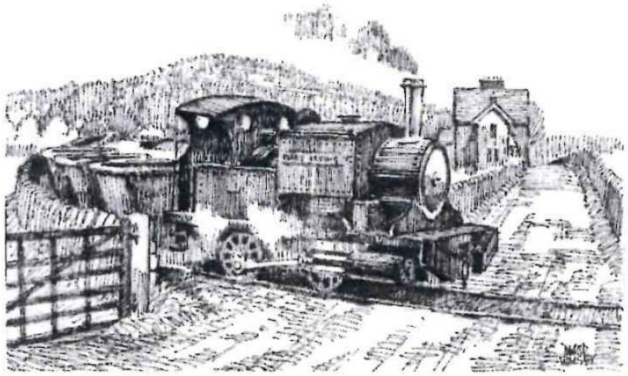
Also note the location of L'al Cheggie Line bridge now buried. The bridge and railway are long since unused.

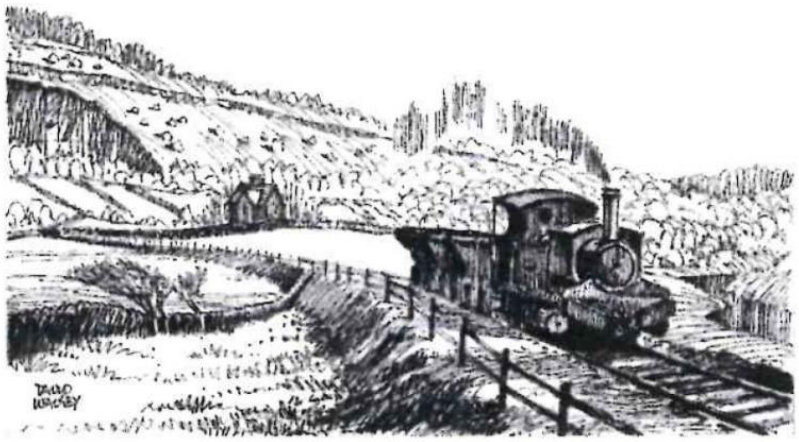


L'al Cheggie Line bridge

7 – Turn left onto Cotestones Road.

The pictures below shows the Mary Irving engine about to cross the lane and a track bed view.





8 – Bear left at the end (not through the gate).

9 – Follow the path and go through the kissing gate.

10 – Go through the 2nd kissing gate and continue on to the remaining track bed.

11 – Follow the line of the track bed alongside the River Keer estuary.

Note on your right the reclaimed landfill site recently capped and grassed over. Also observe the methane gas reclamation unit generating electricity from the reclaimed landfill.

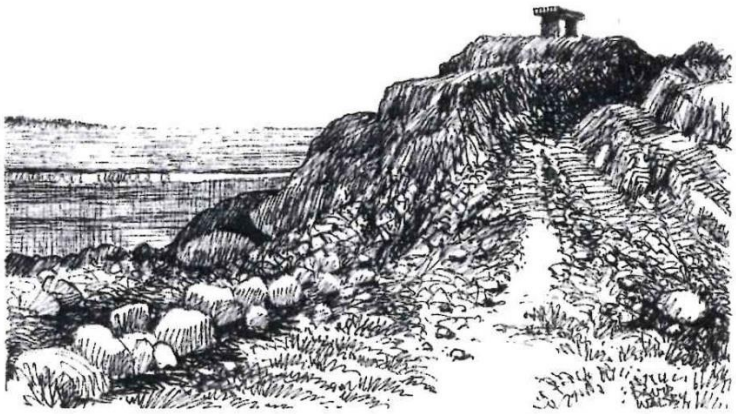
12 – Continue on past the stock car racing track on your right, and you will arrive at a steel container placed on high ground. This is the remaining railway track bed.

13 – Walk alongside the container and you are up on the remaining part of the L'al Cheggie Line track. This continues for a few hundred yards.

As you walk note the puddings of slag shaped as the crucibles dumped them. They had cooled down keeping their shape for over 120 tears despite nature's forces.

14 – A long stretch of the embankment has been removed, and thousands of tons of material were taken to build the A590 bypass to Barrow. You must descend carefully following a line towards the headland.

From here you can observe what is arguably the best view of Morecambe Bay, the Lakeland Hills, Howgill Fells, and the mountains of the Yorkshire Dales.

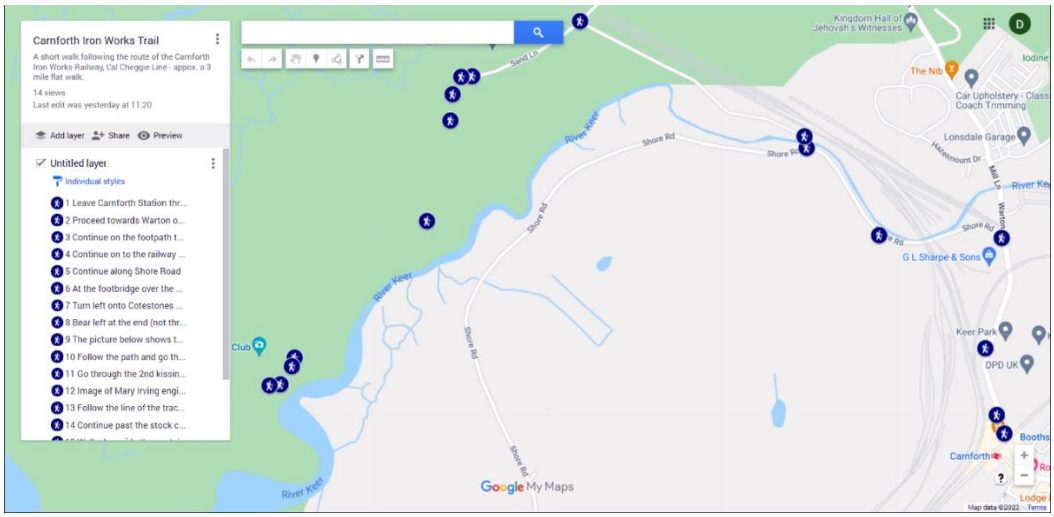


Panoramic viewpoint from 'the bench'

If you are feeling adventurous and wish to explore the slag tips, you can see in the distance Jenny Brown's Point at Silverdale. The massively ambitious project was to reach that point using landfill, and to gain the many thousands of acres of land. Unfortunately, nature and economic forces prevailed and the slump of 1929 closed down Carnforth Iron Works forever.

Your return walk will give you a totally different, but equally spectacular view.

Upon return you can be assured of a warm welcome at Carnforth Station Refreshment Room!



Google map of Carnforth Iron Works Trail

Google Interactive map of this trail -
https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/edit?mid=1VKnRt31paJfJm46Ci6KMKspp4a770Ixg&usp=sharing

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