Lancaster Civic Vision

Celebrating our Heritage – Enhancing our Environment – Shaping our Future

# GLASSON

**Lancaster Civic Vision Guide 8**



## Getting there

Four miles (6km) south-west of Lancaster lies Glasson, a small village well worth a visit. It has been Lancaster's port for over 230 years. By car, take the Lancaster–Blackpool road (the A588) and turn off to Glasson (the B5290). Park by the marina on your left. By bus, get the Lancaster to Knott End service (No. 89). On foot or by bicycle follow National Cycle Route No. 6, which uses the former railway line from Lancaster beside the River Lune.

**How and why it started**

A glance at a map or the satellite photograph above shows the navigation problem. From Morecambe Bay to Lancaster's warehouses on St George's Quay the River Lune repeatedly twists and turns. Taking a laden sailing ship from Ireland, the Baltic or the West Indies up the Lune was difficult, given often stormy winds from any direction, the high tidal range, shifting shoals and strong river currents when the Lune was in flood. The problem worsened as ships got bigger. The merchants wanted an outport nearer the sea and in 1787 Glasson opened. Because it is a dock it copes with the large tidal range but at the price of quayside access only twice a day around high water.

Walk along the East Quay, past the former Victoria Hotel (1830s), nineteenth-century cottages and Harbour House. Beyond the entrance to the dock you can see the sheds, the watch-house and red-and-white lighthouse by the dock gates. You get wonderful views of the estuary from here. The West Quay opposite was constructed in 1958 and also has limited public access. This was where the Nicholsons built ships (1834–1907) and Jesse Hartley built the dry dock for ship repairing (1840– 1969, now filled in).

**The port**

In its time Glasson has handled various cargoes for local industries which have waxed and waned. There was iron ore for the steel works in Carnforth; coal and cork for Williamson's linoleum factory in Lancaster and the town's gasworks; lime, fertilisers and feedstuffs for the farmers; timber and building materials. The port remains small – only for vessels up to 4000 tonnes – and it is managed by the Lancaster Port Commission established in the town in 1750 at St George's Quay (see Guide 59). Many bulk trades moved to Preston after 1872, Fleetwood and, from 1904, Heysham Harbour. Only small coastal vessels can get into the dock or use the new quay out in the estuary. Glasson Grain – animal feeds – is currently the main employer. Around 150,000 tonnes of cargo a year are handled including fertiliser and building materials. There is a regular cargo service to the Isle of Man






**Canal and rail**

Inland from the dock is the marina which occupies much of the canal basin. The far side of the marina is good for bird watching, as is the Lune estuary. The Lancaster Canal from Preston to Kendal reached Lancaster in 1797 (ten years after the dock opened) but the branch down six locks to Glasson did not arrive till 1825, traffic starting the following year.

Worse still for Glasson's connectivity, the railway, which reached Lancaster from the south in 1840, did not get to Glasson till 1883. It was a single-track line, often four trains a day, which closed to passengers in 1930 and for goods to Glasson in 1964.

The marina hosts both canal-boats and large ocean-going yachts – chandlery is a major activity on the site of the old warehouse (1825–1939). The Glasson Sailing Club reinforces the leisure side of Glasson that complements the industrial traffic.

**Other places to visit**

If you walk along the canal, you soon come to Christ Church. This delightful church was designed by Edmund Sharpe, a noted Lancaster architect, and the stained glass (by Shrigley & Hunt) is well worth studying for its many local references. There are separate leaflets on *Stained Glass in Lancaster* (No. 6) and *Edmund Sharpe* (No. 32).

If you return to the dock, cross the swing bridge between the marina and dock and walk up the hill. You pass a row of neat cottages on your right, Ten Row (1835) and then Norfolk House (*c.* 1850), the home of a Lancaster merchant who appreciated the superb all-round view. Across the Lune lies Sunderland Point (See Guide 9 in this series) and the Irish Sea.

To the north-west are the nuclear power stations at Heysham. To the north are the hills of the southern Lake District and to the north-east lies Lancaster, the green dome of the Ashton Memorial (Guide No. 55) being clear.

To the east are the white roofs of Lancaster University (Guide No. 38) and beyond these the Forest of Bowland, part of the Pennines (Guide No. 41). There is a viewing platform which points out these and other sites.

If you return to Glasson by the road which curves down along the estuary on your left, you will pass the factory on the site of Nicholson's shipyard which until recently manufactured car exhausts and is now run by Glasson Grain.

At the foot of this road, a left turn takes you in 100 metres to the offices of the Port Commissioners and the Port of Lancaster Smokehouse and delicatessen. A right turn takes you along Ten Row and back to the Dock itself. Glasson's pub (the Dalton Arms) serves food and there is a café, snack bar, shop, primary school and public toilets. Enjoy your visit!



Lancaster Canal enters Marina Basin



Marina locks to Dock beyond



Glasson to Lune Estuary, Sunderland Point and Irish Sea

**Reading**

Lancaster City Council *Glasson Conservation Area Appraisal.* Lancaster: Lancaster City Council
http://www.lancaster.gov.uk/planning/conservation/conservation-areas

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