

17 Calderstones Branch – During WW1 the military took over the hospital and it became Queen Mary's Military Hospital. This short lesser known branch line served the hospital and ambulance trains arriving from as far away as Dover.

A stile adjacent to the old bridge leads down onto the old track bed and continues a short distance to an adventure playground.

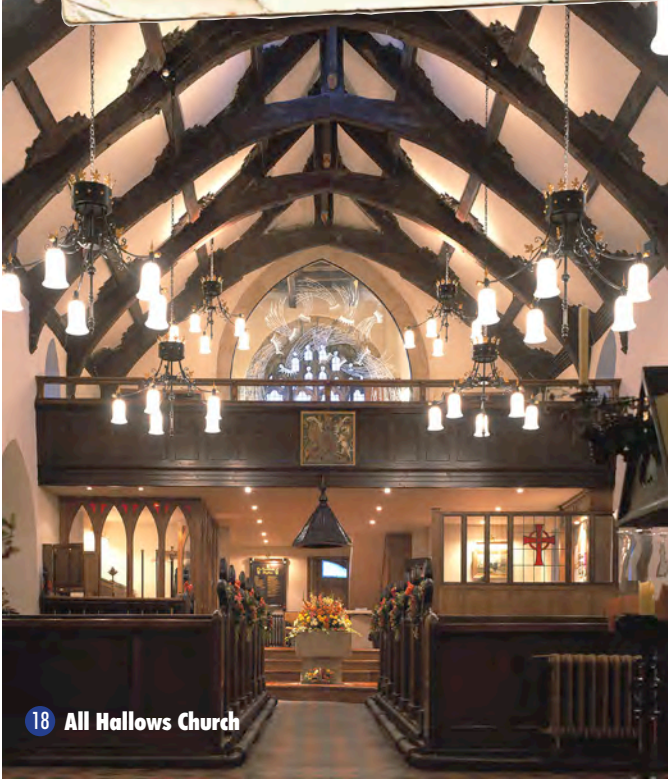
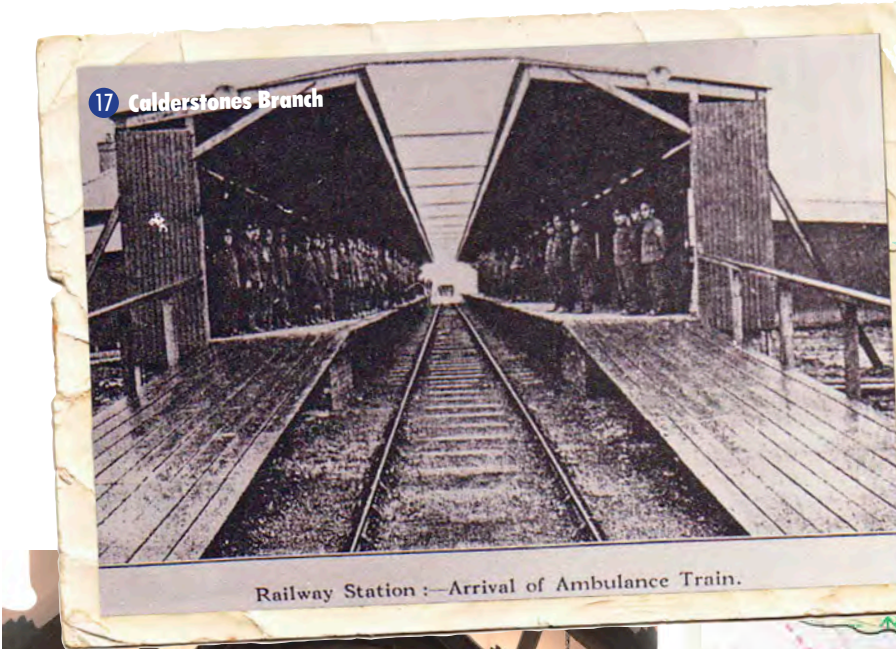
Continue along the road passing the Aspinall Arms on our right, crossing the River and turning right immediately after the Hillcrest Restaurant you will arrive at the church entrance.

18 Mitton Hall & All Hallows Church – Mitton Hall is Grade II listed and is thought to have been constructed in 1487. Housing a timber framed Great Hall, only one of a number surviving in Lancashire today the Hall is now a restaurant and hotel. All Hallows Church was first mentioned in 1103 and probably consisted of a wooden Saxon Church. The present gothic styled building dates from 1270 and in the churchyard there are numerous monuments including a 14th Century cross head.

At the next junction bear right following the B6243 road to Clitheroe via Edisford Bridge. Approaching Clitheroe take a left turn into Castle View to reach the railway station.

19 Clitheroe – The town's name is said to derive from the Anglo Saxon for Rocky Hill and is home to possibly the smallest Norman Keep in England and one of the oldest buildings in Lancashire standing atop of a 35 metre outcrop of limestone. There are magnificent views from the top of the Keep and the museum is open to the public.

Hourly trains run to Manchester via Blackburn 7 days a week but space is not guaranteed for bikes in morning or evening peak times. For more information visit: www.nationalrailenquiries.co.uk



14 Spring Wood – There is a Visitor Centre, toilets and picnic areas available at this popular nature walk.

Leaving Spring Wood follow the signs for Whalley. On arrival at Whalley turn right at the mini roundabout then first left at the Delacy Arms into Church Lane. Follow the road past the church and turn right into The Sands adjacent to the Abbey entrance and continue through the old gatehouse arch and on to Whalley Arches.

15 Whalley – Cycling into Whalley you will pass the parish church of St Mary & All Saints which dates back to AD628. You will also cycle past the main entrance to Whalley Abbey, founded in the 14th Century by Cistercian monks and described by them as being locus benedictus – a blessed place. The ruins of the Abbey are open to public.

16 Whalley Viaduct – Cycling under the original gatehouse for the Abbey you will soon arrive at the magnificent Whalley Viaduct which dominates the valley landscape. The viaduct consists of 48 arches and is 678 yards long. It consumed 7 million bricks and 436,000 cubic feet of stone during its construction, and cost £35,000 to build. Arches 12 and 13 collapsed during construction killing three men. Their bodies were kept at the Judge Walmsley pub during the inquiry into the accident.

Leaving the arches turn right into Broad Lane and continue along until the junction with Mitton Road. Here on our right is Whalley Station for anyone completing their journey here. Trains run hourly seven days a week to Manchester or Clitheroe.

If continuing your journey to Clitheroe take a left turn out of Broad Lane onto Mitton Road and continue straight on at the mini roundabout until Ribbles Valley memorial cemetery is reached. The old Calderstone branch line passed under the road at this point.



11 Martholme Embankment – Having returned to the former track bed you will soon climb onto Martholme Viaduct, a huge engineering structure 40 to 55 feet high which gave the engineers massive problems during its construction. All of the materials for this embankment came from cuttings cut during the lines construction along the section from Cunliffe to Great Harwood. Abandoned and working coalmines also added to the problem and at least one mine working was broken into, causing slippage during construction. In fact the Loop line was troubled with mining works at several points with Martholme Colliery (Cock Pit), Park Colliery, Bridge Hey Colliery, Constant Mary Colliery and Billy Fly Pit all having possible impact on the railway's construction.

12 Martholme Viaduct – Cycling along the top of the embankment you will soon arrive at the stunningly spectacular Martholme Viaduct. This was constructed by Thomas Stone & Sons of Newton-le-Willows and was completed in 1874. The ten arches built on a curve, stride across the valley 60 feet above the River Calder. The viaduct was originally planned to be built of wood, but coal discovered during surveying works was sold and the resulting cash was used to build the viaduct using locally quarried stone.

Having viewed the viaduct we now need to back track slightly and take a right turning off the embankment to our right approximately three hundred yards from the viaduct.

13 Martholme Colliery (Cock Pit) – You will leave the railway embankment via the old track bed into what was Cock Pit. This pit was worked from 1848 until 1930 and reception sidings existed on both sides of the branch line across the embankment.

Leaving the pit area turn left into Martholme Lane and turn right towards Whalley passing the Gamecock public house. Continue on through the traffic lights following Whalley Road. At the next set of traffic lights you can turn right and enjoy a rest at the Spring Wood picnic area where toilets and picnic tables are available.



For more information

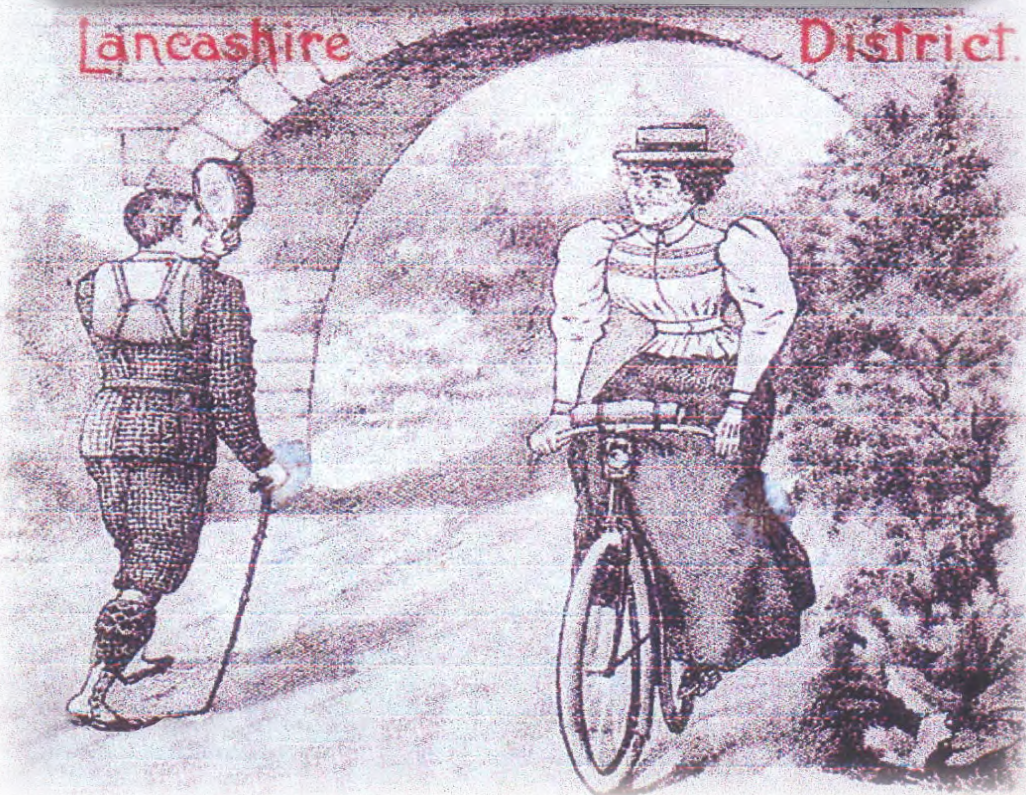
www.communityrailancashire.co.uk
www.lancashire.gov.uk/cycling



CYCLING INTO RAILWAY HISTORY

GREAT HARWOOD LOOP

Blackburn to Clitheroe



Directions & historical features of the routes:

The ride starts at Witton Country Park, Blackburn.

1 Witton Country Park – 480 acres of beautiful mixed woodland, parkland and farmland to the West of Blackburn. The estate was once owned by the Feilden family, who built and lived in Witton House (1800 -1946) and created the park at the same time. Sadly the house was demolished in 1952, however the former stables and coach houses remain and now form part of the visitor centre. National cycle route network 6 (London – Keswick) runs through the park and there are mountain bike trails located in the nearby Billinge Woods

Leaving the park via the main entrance on Preston Old Road turn right and follow the cycle way signs which take you left off the road along a marked cycle way. The route skirts playing fields before reaching Henry Whalley Street. Keep straight ahead here cross another road keeping straight until after about one hundred yards the canal towpath is reached. Turn left along the tow path heading towards Blackburn.

2 Leeds & Liverpool Canal – Running through Blackburn from Feniscowles in the SW to Whitebirk in the NE and skirting the town centre to the east of Blackburn railway station this important industrial transport artery arrived in the town in 1810 and became the chief focus for industrial growth in the 19th Century, with raw cotton imported via Liverpool to support the ‘weaving capital of the world’.

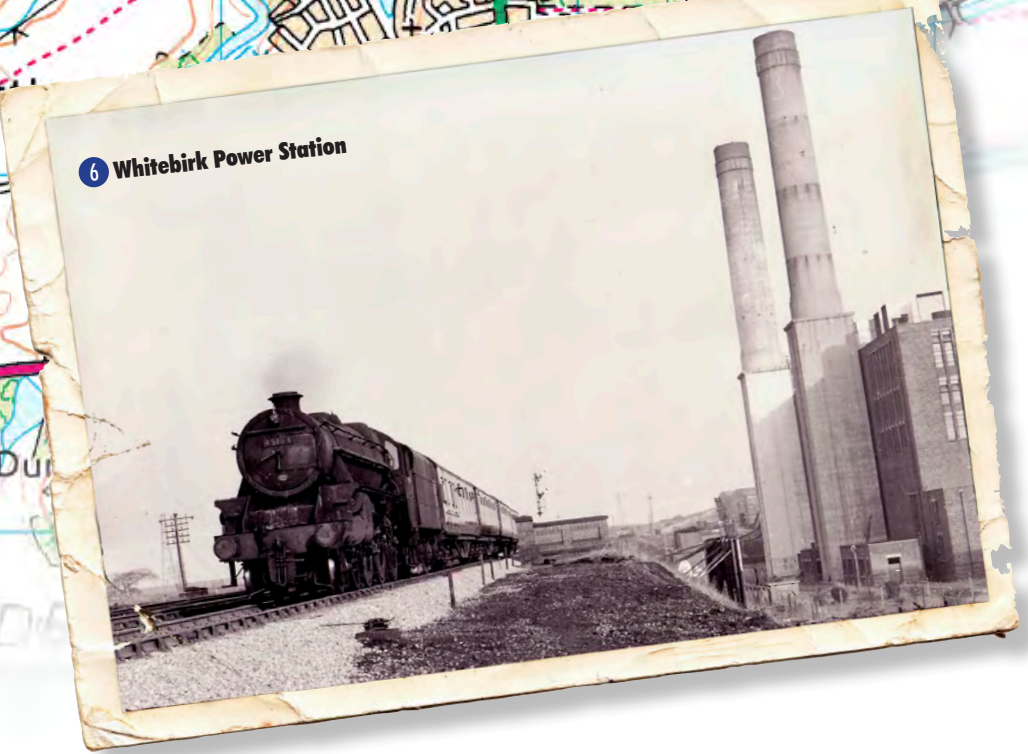
3 Eanam Wharf - This Grade II listed former canal warehouse on the banks of the Leeds & Liverpool canal is now a fully refurbished business development hub incorporating a visitor centre. Leaving Eanam Wharf along the canal towpath the remains of Blackburn’s former cotton industry can be noted as large crumbling walls of former mills can be seen with their former loading bays long since bricked up.

4 Appleby’s Flour Mill – This magnificently renovated building once a rail - connected flourmill now houses amongst other things Granada’s local news station. The mill had its own saddle tank shunting engine aptly named “Appleby”. It was used to move grain trucks across Appleby St from Daisyfield sidings into the mill yard and then push them into the arched loading bays at the base of the building. The diminutive locomotives old shed is the only sign of the railway’s former connection with the mill and can be seen in the new car park. The engine was dismantled on site in 1968 and sent for scrap.

5 Imperial Mill - This architectural giant of a mill was built in 1900 and was the only purpose built ring mill in Blackburn, designed by the architect Sydney Stott. Initially it housed 70,000 ring spindles, but by 1907 the number had increased to 90,000. Spinning ceased in 1980 and the mill was split into smaller industrial units. The mill is constructed of machine brick with stone and glazed brick highlights. The two copper roofed Latrine turrets add to the grandeur of the building.



BLACKBURN



6 Whitebirk Power Station – It is hard to imagine that a massive power station once stood here. Opened in 1921 by Lord Derby it was closed in 1976 with the cooling towers demolished in 1982. Part of its footprint on one bank of the canal has become a large retail park whilst the other bank has returned to nature. The old concrete bunker for unloading coal, complete with iron rings for securing the barges can be seen on the far bank. Railway sidings were also to be found on this side of the canal bank which once echoed to the power stations locomotive fleet shunting and sorting coal from local collieries.

7 Bridge Number 9 – Constructed of stone and cast steel this bridge carries the Blackburn to Colne railway line over the canal. This is a rough track but after a couple of hundred yards a stone wall is reached and a track on your right leads you down to the old trackbed. Continue along trackbed towards Great Harwood.

8 Cunliffe Quarries – Several spoil heaps which provided stone for all the bridges on the Great Harwood Loop line can be noted up on the hillside

At Cut Lane canal bridge (No 107) leave the canal tow path via a steep path and gate and turn left onto Cut Lane. This is a rough track but after a couple of hundred yards a stone wall is reached and a track on your right leads you down to the old trackbed. Continue along trackbed towards Great Harwood.

9 North Lancashire Loop – On leaving the canal towpath you will travel along the track bed of the North Lancashire Loop line (also known as the Great Harwood Loop). You will join the track adjacent to a partly filled in farm occupation bridge, which ironically has a stone span disappearing underground less than a mile from where it was quarried. Following the track bed on a raised embankment you will cross a stone sided farm occupation bridge, its iron components cast at Thompson’s Foundry Blackburn. Close to Norden High School you will pass under Rishton Road Bridge, a beautifully crafted structure made from locally quarried stone.

10 The White Path – This section of your journey is known locally as the White Path, and it accurately follows the straight line of the old railway skirting the outlying parts of Great Harwood. You will eventually cross one more bridge over the narrow Tottleworth Lane. The railway ran in a cutting along this section but your path follows the route. Nothing remains at Great Harwood other than the Station Master’s house and two massive gateposts standing like sentinels guarding the entrance to the old goods yard.

At the end of the cycle way turn left into Station Road and continue along until the junction adjacent to the Royal Hotel. Turn right into Heys Lane and continue until Alan Ramsbottom Way is reached on your right. Almost immediately opposite this road turn left onto a grassy path and continue your journey along the track of the old railway line.

The railway soon crossed over Hyndburn Road on an over bridge, which was removed shortly after the line closed in the early 1960s.

At the end of this section of path turn left up a small flight of wooden sleeper steps and follow the road right crossing Pendle Road and then turning right into Lyndon Road. Take care crossing the main road and proceed into Mill Lane following the lane down the hill. At Harwood Bar caravan park take the path to the left opposite the caravan park entrance marked Martholme. Once again you are following the path of the old railway.



Photographs courtesy of Lancashire County Council, Lancashire & Yorkshire Railway Society, Ken Roberts, Brian Haworth, Simon Clarke.