

Tales from DalesRail

Exploring Settle Carlisle Viaducts (I) – Merrygill and Podgill Richard Watts

DalesRail may not be operating in 2020 but that doesn't stop us sharing our many interesting experiences about our journeys. We hope you will share your interesting stories, favourite walks, fascinating anecdotes and pictures about DalesRail. Please send them to Richard Watts at richard.watts.crl@gmail.com or Simon Clarke at simon.clarke.crl@gmail.com

The Settle Carlisle line is renowned for its many dramatic viaducts and in time I will look at one of two of these. This tale though is about viaducts on another but related line – the Eden Valley Railway which crosses the Settle Carlisle line near Smardale and Appleby and a walk you can do from Kirkby Stephen that takes in two majestic and now well preserved viaducts. I am not going to go into copious details about the walk you can check it out using Google maps or better still the appropriate Ordnance Survey map.

So, take DalesRail to Kirkby Stephen station where you alight! Take the concessionary path into the town and head for the Market Square. From there take the footpath to Hartley crossing over the lovely Franks Bridge on your way. Passing through Harley and taking the road that heads towards Hartley Quarry and the Nine Standards you will come to a path that starts more or less at Merrygill Viaduct.



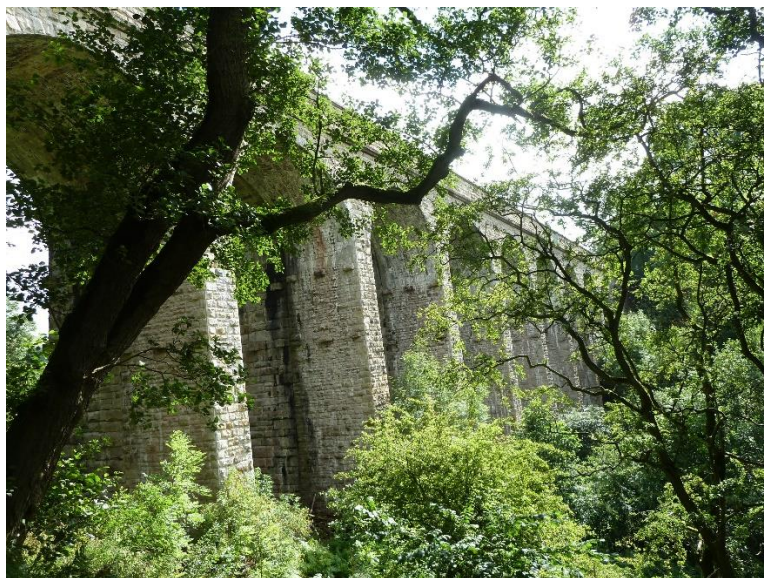
DalesRailers taking the concessionary path from Kirkby Stephen station to the town.

Take the path up to Merrygill viaduct and you are now on track bed of the former Eden Valley Railway that at one time crossed over Stainmore and connected the coalfields of South Durham with the iron and steel industries of the Furness district of Lancashire and West Cumberland. The line itself opened in 1861 and parts of it have been preserved as you will see at the end of this walk if you visit Kirkby Stephen East station.

Both Merrygill, 9 arches, and Podgill, 11 arches, were originally built to carry only a single-track line but were widened in 1889 to carry two tracks. The different styles are easily seen at Podgill where a short path takes you down so you can see beneath the viaduct.



Podgill Viaduct showing clearly the original (left) and later extension (right)



General view of Podgill Viaduct

Podgill Viaduct also offers good views into the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Hope you have a good head for heights as both viaducts are about 80 feet high! Use OS map OLI9 - Howgill Fells and Upper Eden Valley

Apart from other railway relics such as the former platelayer's hut the walk also forms part of the Poetry Path along which 12 large stones are inscribed with poems representing each month of the hill farmer's year.

The line ends at the new Millennium Bridge which is close to the dramatic Devils Mustard Mill. If you head towards the main road through Kirkby Stephen close to what was the Croglin Castle Hotel you come to Kirkby Stephen East station. The station is being looked after by volunteers of the Stainmore Railway Company and is generally open on Sundays during the DalesRail season. Well worth a visit and you may be lucky and trains will be running!



Kirkby Stephen East station

I hope you have been inspired to join DalesRail when it runs again in 2021 and will want to investigate these two graceful viaducts and follow the Poetry Path.

If you want to find out more about Kirkby Stephen and the surrounding area then the following links may be helpful:

Northern Viaducts Trust

Both viaducts are in the care of the Northern Viaduct Trust and their website details the circular walk from Kirkby Stephen that takes in Merrygill and Podgill Viaducts.

The website address is: www.nvt.org.uk

The website describes the circular walk taking in the two viaducts.

Kirkby Stephen East station

The station is now looked after by volunteers of the Stainmore Railway Company and further details can be found by using the following link to their website:

<https://www.kirkbystepheneast.co.uk/>

For a detailed history of the line take a look at Peter Walton's 'The Stainmore and Eden Valley Railways' published by the Oxford Publishing Company (OPC).

Kirkby Stephen:

For more information about Kirkby Stephen then use the following link to the Visit Cumbria website:

<https://www.visitcumbria.com/evnp/kirkby-stephen/>

Other information about the town can be found here:

<https://www.kirkby-stephen.com/>

Devil's Mustard Mill

A dramatic waterfall on the River Eden as it passes through Stenkrith Park.

http://visituppereden.org.uk/?page_id=196

<https://www.themustardmill.co.uk/about-the-mustard-mill>

