

Carnforth Canal Walks



**Exploring the glorious countryside
near the Lancaster Canal**



Carnforth Canal Walks

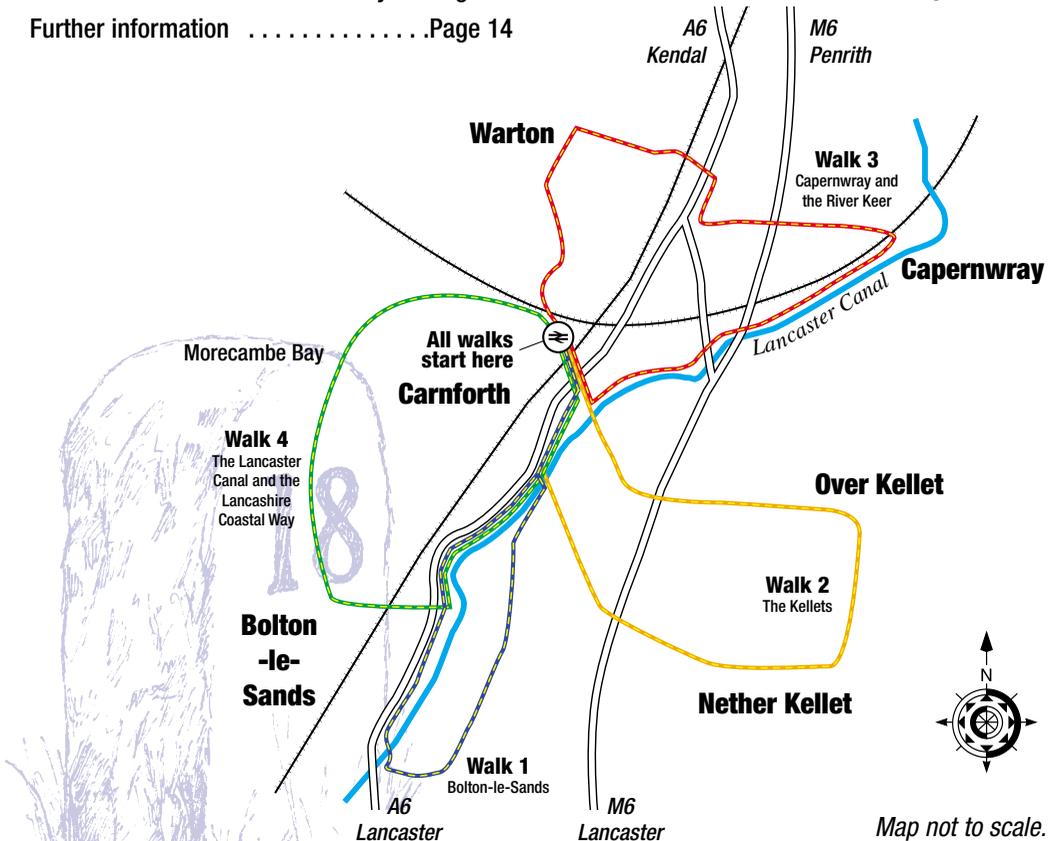


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The Old Rectory at Warton



Map not to scale.

Exploring the glorious countryside near the Lancaster Canal

The setting for the walks

Carnforth is tucked into a crook of the great expanse of Morecambe Bay, where the little river Keer spills its waters into a complex of sea marsh and shifting sandbanks renowned for wading birds, shellfish and remarkable sunsets. Rising behind these coastal flatlands is a landscape of limestone knolls and ridges, miniature ranges of hills dotted with hidden farms, flower meadows and cool woods. In the folds of these hills are tiny villages with cores of silvery-grey limestone cottages, old churches and grand manor houses huddled beside village greens or clinging to steep hillsides below flower-rich cliffs and crags.



Swans and Cygnets on the Canal near Capernwray

Linking all of these features is the Lancaster Canal, owned and operated by British Waterways, a ribbon of water once busy with working narrowboats and swift packet boats but now given over to the sedate pace of pleasure cruisers.

What was once a noisy, thriving thoroughfare is now an idyllic way in to an exploration of this hidden corner of Lancashire.



The Lancaster Canal near Over Kellet

The four easy walks detailed in this booklet have been carefully researched to introduce you to the character of the area, allowing ample time and opportunity to explore the countryside which links two of England's Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty; 'The Forest of Bowland' and 'Arnsdale and Silverdale'.

None of the walks are at all strenuous. All are well waymarked and generally follow field paths, coastal tracks, farm lanes, minor roads and the canal towpath. Occasionally, a short stretch of busier road is followed - take particular care along these stretches and exercise caution before crossing any of these highways.

Carnforth

Probably originating as a fishing settlement, Carnforth developed as an iron-smelting centre, the vast deposits of limestone locally ensuring an endless supply of this important raw material in the smelting process. It was the coming of the railway age in Victorian times, however, that secured the town's future and status as a major transport centre.

Carnforth Canal Walks



Carnforth Station today

The Lancaster & Carlisle Railway passed through in 1846, linking the northwest of England to Scotland. A decade or so later, the Furness Railway built its viaducts over the Kent and Leven estuaries, opening up the developing iron and slate mining industries of Furness. The natural place for a junction with the main line was Carnforth. Just a few years later, the 'Little North Western' line from Skipton arrived from the east, cementing an era of prosperity for the town. This is mirrored by the fine railway architecture, of the main station building and the imposing crescents and hotel nearby.

Another railway connection familiar to many is that in 1945 the station was chosen by David Lean as the location for his film of the Noel Coward short story 'Brief Encounter', one of the classic films of British cinema. Renamed as Milford Junction, film buffs will recognise the great clock, underpass entrance and exterior of the station waiting room.

Today there is still an important junction at Carnforth, but the goods yards and sidings are largely silent, the only regular activity being the restoration and storage of old steam engines and carriages.

*Trevor Howard
and Celia Johnson
from the film 'Brief Encounter'*

The town's history as a centre of the iron industry is equally cyclical. The Carnforth Ironworks Company established a works in 1846. It was coincidental and fortunate that there was a recession in the Earl of Dudley's iron works in Worcestershire and the redundant men had to move from their homes to find work elsewhere. A number of the men relocated to the new works and lived in the nearby company village of Dudley - now Millhead.

In 1864 the Carnforth Haematite Company took over and greatly expanded production, using iron ore moved by rail from the vast deposits on the Furness Peninsula. By 1872 steel making became prominent, using the new Bessemer Process (Mr Harry Bessemer, the inventor of the process was a shareholder of the company). By 1889 this development had failed. Iron production ticked over until 1929 when the whole enterprise closed down. The site (near to the station where the industrial estate is now) was taken over by the War Department as an ordnance depot and remained as such until the 1960s.

During much of this period of change, the Lancaster Canal continued to pay its way. It had a love-hate relationship with the railways, eventually being taken over by the London & North Western Railway in 1885.



Carnforth Canal Walks

The Lancaster Canal

Promoted by local landowners and businessmen to allow the import of coal from the Lancashire coalfield and to take out lime and agricultural produce from north Lancashire and Westmorland, the Lancaster Canal opened in 1797 along a remarkable lock-free 43 mile stretch between Tewitfield, just north of Carnforth, and Preston. It is a broad canal with locks 14 feet wide, twice the width of many of the other canals in England.

In 1803 a horse-drawn tramway connection linked the canal to the national network at Walton Summit, near Chorley (the canal was never connected, by water, to the rest of the inland waterway network). In 1819 the extension north to Kendal opened following the completion of the Tewitfield eight-lock staircase. The renowned engineer John Rennie was the mastermind behind the canal. The crowning glory of this remarkable undertaking is the superb stone aqueduct passing sixty feet above the river Lune in Lancaster.

Trade was brisk from the outset, and increased considerably when the branch to Glasson Dock was opened in 1826. This small port was developed to save Lancaster's maritime trade, in danger of collapse because the river Lune to Lancaster's own quays became increasingly silted. One aspect for which the Lancaster Canal became renowned was its 'Fly-Boat' service. This, an express passenger boat service, took just eight hours between Kendal and Preston, easily as fast as competing stage coaches on the turnpike roads and far more comfortable. The horses drawing the boat were changed at frequent intervals, allowing a speed of up to 10 mph to be achieved.



Narrowboat near Capernwray

The success of the railways, however, saw the gradual demise of canal traffic. The last regular cargo was coal to Kendal power station, though this ceased in 1944.

In 1948 ownership of the Canal transferred to the Docks and Inland Waterways Executive. By 1962 it had passed to British Waterways who own and manage it today. The section north of the Tewitfield Locks was officially abandoned in 1955, and in 1968 the new M6 motorway cut across the canal's line immediately north of here.

Keen to prevent the total loss of the navigation, a Charitable Trust was formed in 1963 to help preserve that which remained. Today the Lancaster Canal is once again thriving. So much so, in fact, that work is currently underway at the southern end to cut a short new stretch of canal at Preston to link to the national network. In the north there are plans too, to restore the length beyond Tewitfield, linking the canal once again to Kendal.



Walk 1 Bolton-le-Sands from Carnforth

4.5 miles, 7.5 km. 2 hours 30 mins

This is an easy walk along the towpath to the pleasant village of Bolton-le-Sands, returning along quiet, flower rich lanes and tracks. The canal winds through pastures inland from the sands, revealing expansive views across Morecambe Bay to the Cartmel and Furness Peninsulas (both part of Lancashire until 1973) and the mountainous heart of the Lake District.

1 From Market Street cross the traffic lights and continue along Kellet Road to the canal bridge. Before the bridge turn right down to the play area and on to the canal towpath. Turn right and continue past the Carnforth Marina and on to Bolton-le-Sands. At the first bridge in the village you can cross to visit a community woodland but return via the footpath to continue along the towpath right into the centre of the village.

Bolton-le-Sands grew in medieval times as a community based on cockle picking, shrimp fishing and farming. The earliest buildings have not survived, but there are many from the 1600s near to the old village centre at Crosshill and along lanes leading towards the foreshore salt marshes. Holy Trinity Church was founded in the 11th century, with later additions including a 15th century tower. Nearby, the impressive St Mary's Catholic Church is pure Victorian, dating from 1884. The name of one of the village pubs, The Packet Boat Hotel, recalls the days of the express boat service along the canal.



Spring at Holy Trinity Church

- 2** At bridge 122 turn off the towpath, cross the bridge and walk up the hill, St Michael's Lane, towards the sharp spire of the Catholic Church. Cross the main road slightly right and then bear left up along Bolton Lane, towards Nether Kellet. After a hundred yards take Mount Pleasant Lane to the left. In half a mile this reaches a cross roads with Thwaite Brow Lane. Continue straight across, the lane soon becoming a rougher track.
- 3** Shortly, just before Mount Pleasant itself, the track bears right round the buildings. Continue along the track to pass down through a gate to the canal.

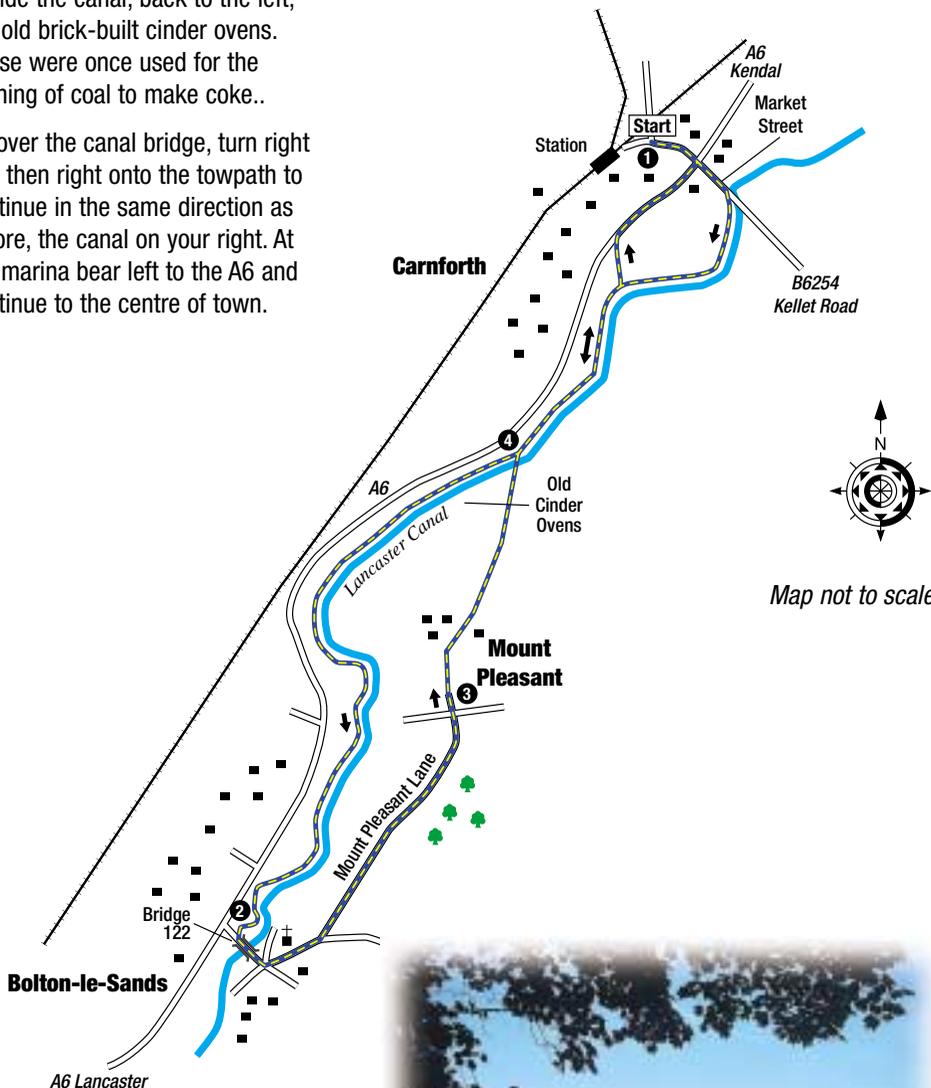


Wildfowl at Bolton Turnpike Bridge

Walk 1 Bolton-le-Sands from Carnforth

Beside the canal, back to the left, are old brick-built cinder ovens. These were once used for the burning of coal to make coke..

- 4 Go over the canal bridge, turn right and then right onto the towpath and continue in the same direction as before, the canal on your right. At the marina bear left to the A6 and continue to the centre of town.



Hawkshead Woods, beside Mount Pleasant Lane

Walk 2 Carnforth to The Kellets

5.5 miles, 9 km. 3 hours

This pleasant walk, to the twin villages of Nether Kellet and Over Kellet, involves some gentle climbs up into the glorious low limestone hills which rise inland of Carnforth. The modest height reached - perhaps 350 feet (110 metres) - unveils superb views across coast, countryside and mountains.

- 1** From Market Street cross the traffic lights and the A6 to continue along Kellet Road to the canal bridge. Turn right immediately before the bridge to reach the towpath via the play area; turn right along it. Continue past the marina and on to the next bridge, number 127. Just before the bridge leave the towpath by a wooden gate on the right, and walk to and over the bridge. Go straight ahead up the drive to Thwaite House Farm.
- 2** One field before the house, and at their entrance gate, take a stile on the left and head diagonally to a signpost and two metal ladder stiles, then continue diagonally to another similar stile. Go over this and then go straight ahead again towards the pylon, but bear left round the hedge to a stile at the end of a wall. Go up the field and at the summit bend diagonally right down to the left one of a pair of gates. Walk to the bridge over the M6. Cross this and the stile to the right of a gate and then cross the corner of the field to the steps onto the road.
- 3** Turn right towards Nether Kellet. At the T-junction turn left along the road signed Over Kellet. At the last bungalow on the left turn up Laithbuts Lane. Continue as it changes to green lane and climbs the hill. Just after an open area on the left, the path has been diverted away from the quarry and the caravan site on the right. After the main descent a road can be seen at the bottom of

a field. Head for the far left hand field corner to a stile and path which runs along the hedge to the end, where you turn left through their compound to climb up over stone steps into the wood. Follow round the bottom part of Kit Bill Wood for some distance until the path drops down through some conifers to a stile into a field. The massive old ash tree here is an ancient boundary marker. Over Kellet can be seen, it's church isolated in fields to your right.

Together, both Nether Kellet and Over Kellet were recorded in the Domesday Book as Chellet (meaning spring), but today they are two distinct entities. Both are centred on huge village greens. The old church of St Cuthbert served both villages until 1879 when Nether built its own. This helps explain the isolation of medieval St. Cuthbert's, said to be built near to a place where the body of St. Cuthbert himself was secreted from Viking raiders in the ninth century. Just off the village green in Over Kellet is the old village trough beside Capernwray Road, still in use today.

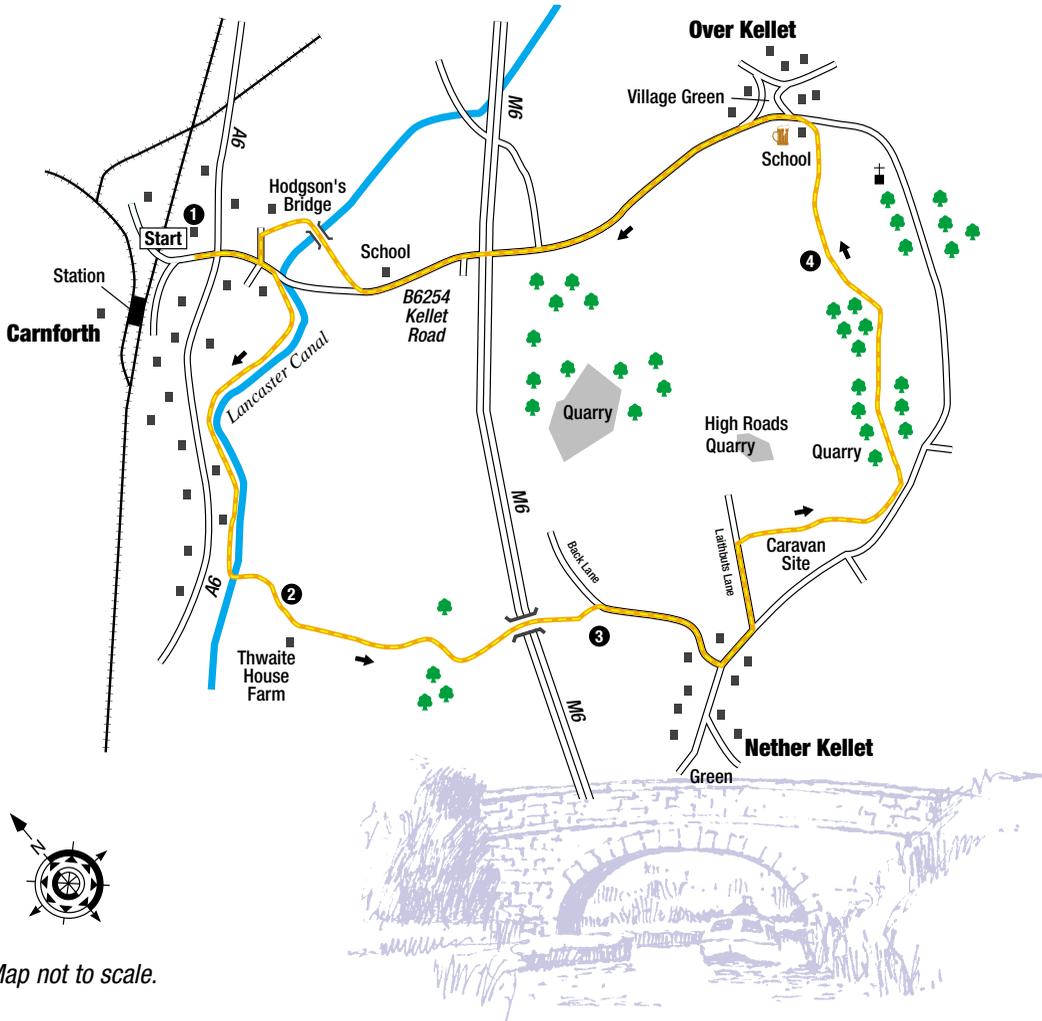


An ancient Ash tree marks an old boundary

Walk 2 Carnforth to The Kelleys

4 Head down the field, beside the hedge to another stile and keep straight past a crumbling barn until the two spires of the old school can be seen. Go through the kissing gate in the bottom left hand corner and down the steps to the road. Turn left and walk past The Eagles Head pub to the village green. Turn left and follow the road back to Carnforth. Just after the High

School on the right, take the railed path on the right, falling to and crossing Hodgson's Bridge over the canal then rising to North Road. This used to be the Glasgow Road and contains some of the older houses of the town. Turn left down to the Shovel Inn, then right to the town centre and Market Street.



Map not to scale.

Walk 3 Capernwray and the River Keer

6 miles, 9.5 km. 3 hours

Water is the theme of this level walk beside the canal and River Keer. It also passes the wildfowl-rich Pine Lake and adjacent sand and gravel workings en route to Warton village, with its connections to historical figures, fine ecclesiastical ruin and a Nature Reserve.

- 1** From Market Street cross the traffic lights and continue along Kellet Road to the canal bridge. Before the bridge turn right down to the play area and on to the canal towpath. Turn left along the canal towpath, water to your right. Just before you first pass under the M6, Warton Crag can be seen on your left with Warton below it. Beyond the motorway bridges is a long rural section, reed-fringed and peaceful. Pass beneath Kellet Lane bridge (No.130) and continue the long half-mile along the towpath to reach Capernwray Bridge (No. 131). The route to Warton is left here, but it is worth going on a few yards to the canal aqueduct over the River Keer. Here can be seen the old mill, the railway bridge and the entrance to the former quarry which is now a caravan site.
- 2** Return to the canal bridge and leave by the steps. Walk ahead along the lane (don't cross the canal!) to cross the stile ahead at the junction, perhaps 100 yards on. Turn right down the field and pass beneath the imposing railway viaduct. Bear left and follow the river bank downstream to the road at Upper Keer Bridge. Here cross over the river and continue downstream along the other bank. The lakes to your right are good bird watching areas. Pass under the M6 and trace the edge of the Pine Lake Resort development. Where the river goes under the link road turn right to the entrance road



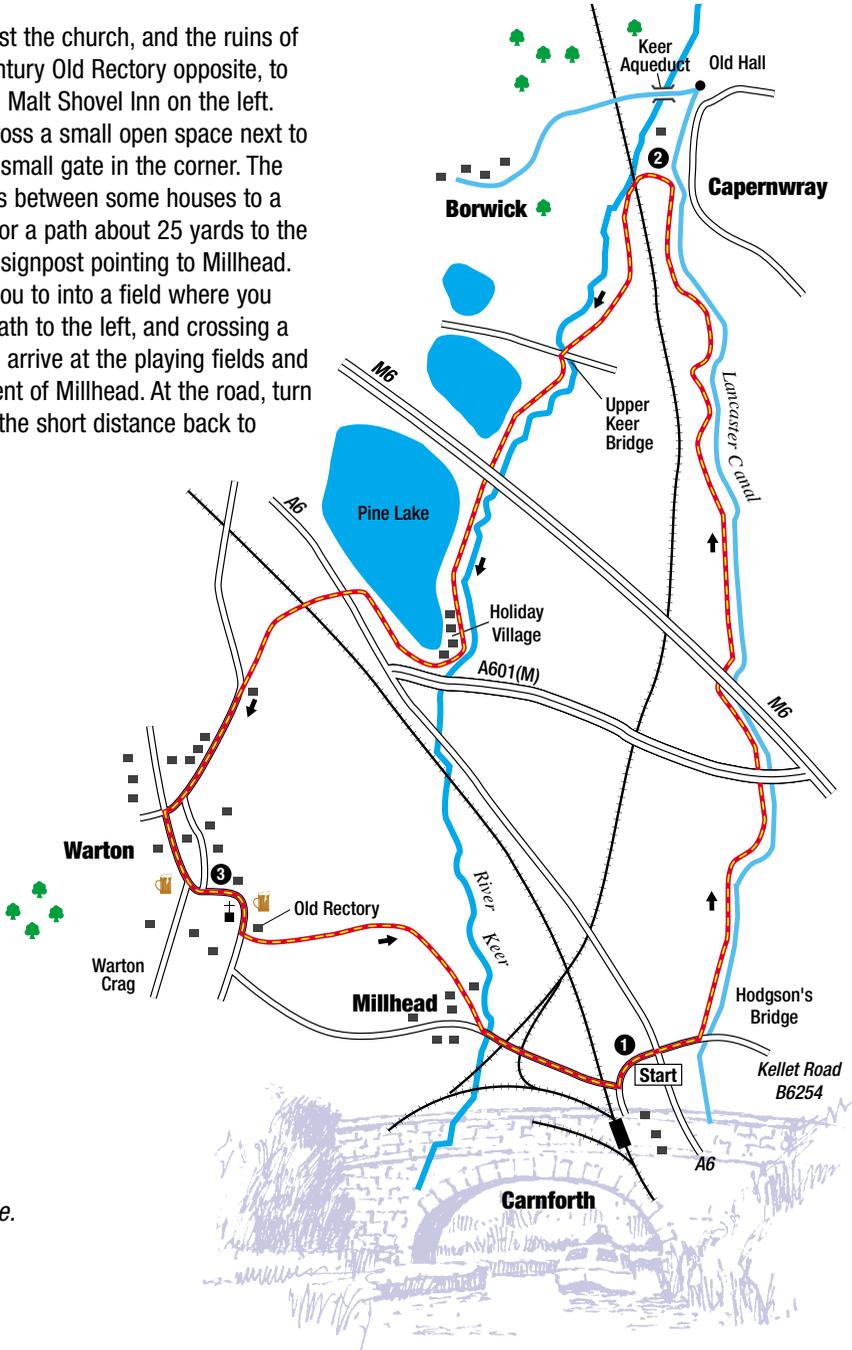
Big skies at Kellet Lane Bridge

of the resort. Cross this and continue along the perimeter for 100 yards to come out onto the A6. Carefully cross the road and head up Threagill Lane towards Warton. At the road turn left to the village and then left along Main Street.

Washington House, near Warton Post Office, proudly flies the Stars and Stripes flag. This perpetuates the link with George Washington, the first President of the USA, members of whose family emigrated from Warton as early colonists. Nearby St Oswald's Church displays his family tree, together with that of Winston Churchill, who had close links to the village by marriage. Towering above the cottages is Warton Crag, vast steps of limestone, partly quarried, partly natural. Steep paths to the top are rewarded with ample views. The Crag is protected as a Local Nature Reserve and SSSI, famous for its wildflowers and the butterflies and moths which feed on these.

Walk 3 Capernwray and the River Keer

3 Continue past the church, and the ruins of the 14th century Old Rectory opposite, to arrive at the Malt Shovel Inn on the left. Turn left across a small open space next to the Inn to a small gate in the corner. The route passes between some houses to a road. Look for a path about 25 yards to the right with a signpost pointing to Millhead. This takes you into a field where you follow the path to the left, and crossing a second field arrive at the playing fields and the settlement of Millhead. At the road, turn left to walk the short distance back to Carnforth.



Map not to scale.

Walk 4 The Canal and the Lancashire Coastal Way

5 miles, 8 km. 2 hours 30 mins

A chance to experience the atmospheric scenery of the salt marshes and sands of the Keer Estuary as it flows into the vast basin of Morecambe Bay, one of Europe's foremost sites for wading waterfowl. Look out, too for cockle harvesters out on the distant flats, practicing their hazardous craft between the tides.

Please note:

The Coastal Path can be liable to flooding for short periods at high tide. Only pass point 2 on this walk if you have at least 2 hours before high tide. Information can be obtained by telephone on 01524 582808.

- 1** From Market Street cross the traffic lights and the A6 to continue along Kellet Road to the canal bridge. Here turn right just before the bridge and walk down through the play area to the canal towpath. Turn right, pass the marina by and remain on the towpath until nearing bridge number 125, known locally as Bolton Cinder Ovens Bridge. Just before the bridge leave the towpath by a gate on the right and follow the road down to the A6. Cross slightly to the right to go down a one-way street. Follow this, St Nicholas Lane, under the railway to the shore.

Before the railway forged a route across viaducts and embankments to the Cartmel Peninsula, the quickest way from this main part of Lancashire to 'Lancashire-over-the-Sands' was to make the risky crossing across the Keer Channel and Warton Sands to Kent's Bank, on the distant shore near the prominent Humphrey Head. It took a skilled man to learn the vagaries of the shifting sands, quicksand and creeks. Such people were employed as professional guides to take coaches and carts across the treacherous passage.



Carnforth Marina

Originally they were employed by the Prior of Cartmel Priory; after this was dissolved by Henry VIII the Crown paid for the Guide. For centuries it remained in the same family, the Carters of Allithwaite. The post of Queen's Guide still exists, held by Cedric Robinson of Grange-over-Sands, who still leads occasional forays across this corner of Morecambe Bay. One of these safe crossings commences not far from Wild Duck Hall.



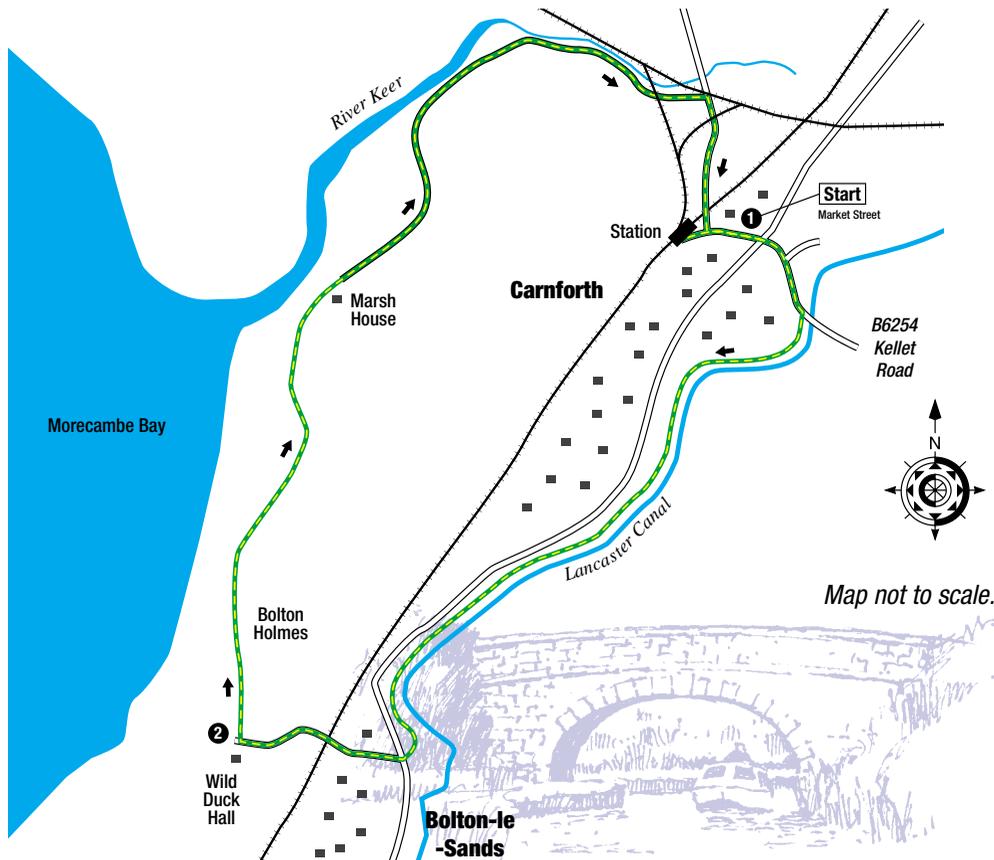
Warton Crag from Bolton-le-Sands foreshore

Walk 4 The Canal and the Lancashire Coastal Way

- 2 Wild Duck Hall is the farm on the shore at the road bend. Here turn right along the track outside the sea wall towards Bolton Holmes Farm. Here leave the track and take to the edge of the salt marsh. If the tide is high or the sea is coming in, then turn back as the way will be flooded ahead. After half a mile you pass Marsh House and there is a better path alongside the river Keer to the road. Bear left along the road, following the river Keer past the footbridge, which takes the Coastal Way on to Warton, and under the railway bridges back to Carnforth town centre.



Morecambe Bay shoreline



Further information

Walking the route

Whenever walking in the countryside it is sensible to carry a warm jumper and waterproof at most times of the year. Additionally, the ground underfoot can be uneven, particularly on the fields, so a stout pair of shoes or sturdy trainers is suggested.

All the walks are waymarked by occasional circular discs with either a blue or yellow arrow on them, often attached to stiles, gate posts or footpath fingerposts.



Capernwray Viaduct

Please follow The Country Code

- Enjoy the countryside and respect its life and work.
- Guard against all risk of fire.
- Fasten all gates.
- Keep your dog(s) under close control.
- Keep to public paths across farmland.
- Use gates and stiles to cross fences, hedges and walls.
- Leave livestock, crops and machinery alone.
- Take your litter home.
- Help to keep all water clean.
- Protect wildlife plants and trees.
- Take special care on country roads.
- Make no unnecessary noise.

Transport

Regular local bus services link Carnforth to Bolton-le-Sands, The Kelleys, Warton, Morecambe and Lancaster. For full details telephone the County Information Centre on 01524 841656. There is also a local rail service between Carnforth and Lancaster. To check times ring 08457 484950. The Tourist Information Centres in Morecambe and Lancaster will also be able to help with public transport enquiries.

Safety

Walking by water offers a most enjoyable day out. Taking a few sensible precautions will help your visit to go smoothly. Keep a close eye on children and don't allow them to paddle in the canal - it is deeper than it looks and the canal bed is composed of thick silt. Don't allow your dog to annoy wildfowl, or livestock in the fields through which these walks may pass. If in doubt, keep your dog on a lead. Walk 4 passes beside great saltmarshes and sandbanks. These areas hide deep pools, swift currents and dangerous sandbanks; stick to the well-walked paths and don't be tempted to pick the sea asters and other flowers. These are colourful, but also protected both by law and by these winding, muddy channels.

High Water

Please note that Walk 4 may be impassable for short periods at the highest tides; ring the number given in the text to that walk to obtain tidal information. After periods of prolonged heavy rain the River Keer is prone to localised flooding. This may affect Walks 3 and 4. If in doubt, seek local advice before setting out.

Acknowledgment

Lancaster City Council would like to thank local members of The Ramblers' Association for their assistance in the development of these walks.

Access for Disabled People

Canal Towpaths and field walks can present problems for people with mobility impairments or wheelchair users. Most of the walks in this guide have parts of their route on roads or tracks, but the majority are in an environment that could be a challenge or inaccessible. It would be advisable for anyone with a mobility impairment to check the particular walk, before setting out.

Tourist information

Staff at Tourist and County Information Centres will be pleased to help with further information on public transport, places to stay, other walking trails and local attractions.

Lancaster TIC, 29 Castle Hill.
Tel: (01524) 32878.

Morecambe TIC, Old Station Buildings,
Marine Road Central.
Tel: (01524) 582808.

Lancaster CIC.
Tel: (01524) 841656.

Other walks in the area

Just three miles to the north of Carnforth are the old Tewitfield Locks, a half mile north of which is the Cinderbarrow Picnic Site and Car Park.

Self-guided walks leaflets let you explore the medieval field systems around the Yealand Villages, the upper (disused) stretches of the Lancaster Canal and the sublime countryside of the limestone knoll country around Priest Hutton.

Above Warton is Warton Crag Nature Reserve, through which a guided route passes, exploring this precious woodland, wild bird and flower-rich landscape. The Crag is at the southern end

of the Arnside and Silverdale AONB, a protected landscape famed for its craggy, wooded coastline, limestone hills and “pavements” and the RSPB Reserve at Leighton Moss with its bitterns, marsh harriers, roe deer and otters. There’s an RSPB Visitor Centre near Silverdale Station.

Carnforth is also the starting point of the Lunesdale Walk, a 37 mile circuit of the hills, valleys and moors on either side of the River Lune. This can be done in stages, using local buses and trains to pick up or leave the route in the area’s picturesque villages.

The Lune Valley Ramble links Lancaster with Kirkby Lonsdale, two historic centres with very different characters. This 16½ mile footpath traces the course of one of England’s most unspoilt rivers. Other walks in the area include the Limestone Link, the Thirlmere Way and the Lancashire Coastal Way.

For details of these routes, together with the relevant guidebooks or leaflets (there is a charge for some of these, others are free), call in at the Tourist Information Centres in Lancaster or Morecambe.

The Lancaster Canal

The canal is owned and managed by British Waterways, and walkers are actively welcomed to use the towpath for quiet, peaceful pursuits. Please ensure that both you and your fellow canal users enjoy the tranquillity of the Lancaster Canal and leave it unspoiled for users in future times.

For further information about the canal contact: British Waterways, Lancaster Office, Main Road, Galgate, Lancaster LA2 0LQ. Tel: 01524 751888.

Back cover photo: ‘Meadowsweet by the Lancaster Canal’
by Jon Sparks © Lancaster City Council.

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