

Copeland Rail Users' Group

Cumbrian coastal line rail walks

Whitehaven – Parton – Harrington

This walk from Whitehaven station goes to Harrington. Alternatives are Whitehaven to Parton (about 1½ miles), Parton to Harrington (4 more miles) and an extension to Workington. It almost all follows a national cycle route, and two disused railway lines. It is equally good by bike (which go on trains). There is a short, steep hill from Parton to Lowca. The opposite way there is a steep section on the main road in Harrington.

All coast line trains stop at Whitehaven and Workington. Parton and Harrington are request stops – ask the conductor or signal to the driver. Trains run roughly hourly, with three on Sundays.

Come out of **Whitehaven** station on Station Road. Tesco and its café are on your right. To the right at the end of the road is the Bransty Arch, a Weatherspoons pub. Other places to eat and drink are in the town to your right and worth exploring. It was the first planned Georgian town in England and has fine buildings. The harbour has a marina. Tourist attractions are the Beacon museum and gallery on the harbour and the Rum Story in Lowther Street recalling Whitehaven's part in the trade with West Africa and Virginia which brought back rum and tobacco. A twenty-minute walk past the harbour takes you to Haig Colliery Mining Museum recalling its underground workings. The c2c cycle route starts from the harbour. Tourist information and toilets are in Market Place. The other Whitehaven station is at Corkickle, through the tunnel under the town built because the then Lord Lonsdale would not allow a line through the streets.

At the end of Station Road is the main road (Bransty Row). Turn sharp left after the Tesco garage onto Bransty Road and left again. Follow the sign for National Cycle Route 72 or Hadrian's Cycleway to Harrington. This stretches from Ravenglass Roman fort to Bowness on Solway, the start of Hadrian's Wall. Here you are also on the Cumbria Coastal Way.

You soon pass through the remains of William Pit. Look back over Whitehaven to the lighthouse and the chimney of Wellington Pit, the site of one of the worst British mining tragedies in 1910 when 136 miners died.. Beyond is St Bees Head. On a clear day you can see the Isle of Man and the Scottish coast, 20 miles away.

Before the first white house on the right at Parton is a millennium milepost (1½ miles to Whitehaven, 6 miles to Workington). To the left is the first archway under the railway leading to the beach. You can look at pebbles and shells before returning to the path further up the coast. Keeping to the path, the remains of the brickworks are on the right.

The path becomes Bank Yard Road. Turn left onto Main Street through the village. **Parton** station is on the left, next to the war memorial. Also on Main Street is a shop, pub and children's playground.

Continue along Main Street which becomes Foundry Road. At the new sewage works on the left we follow Lowca Beck.

At the junction there are two choices. Turn left to continue towards Harrington or right for 200 yards to St Bridget's Parish Church at Moresby, an interesting Georgian building with medieval remains on the Moresby Roman Fort site. The views show its strategic importance. Opposite the church is Moresby Hall, largely designed by Inigo Jones in the seventeenth century.

Go back up the steep hill into Lowca, taking the first turning on the right into Stamford Hill. Bear right at the end keeping the iron gates on your right and follow the cycleway sign. Pass the nursery glasshouses on the right. To the right look over Low Moresby with the fells near Loweswater beyond.

You are now on part of the former Whitehaven, Cleator and Egremont Railway between Parton and Distington, which finally closed in 1973. Pass kennels to both sides, usually with greyhounds. The path veers right under the bypass by a beck. You will often find horses on the path or fields.

Next is Common End, the first part of Distington on the right. Get to Distington itself after the rugby league ground's floodlights of the right. This leads to the Church of the Holy Spirit and down to the village and shops. On the left is a sculpture of a woman and child.

You now reach a junction. To the right is the access road to Distington Toll Bar. The path turns left through the tunnel under the bypass. Again there is a junction. Turn left towards Harrington, joining the former Cleator and Workington Junction Railway which passes through the then Central Station in Workington.

You come to High Harrington, mainly passing bungalows. There is a bridge with a separate footbridge after it supported by a corrugated iron structure.

If you want to walk further, continue on the path for another 2½ miles to Workington. From the old Central Station car park turn left along Oxford Street past the oldest purpose built bus station in Britain (1926) and carry on for ¼ mile to **Workington** station.

To go to **Harrington** turn left off the cycle path looking over Workington. Up the coast is Siddick wind farm. Turn right onto Main Road (A597) and down the hill to Beckstone Bridge. Turn left at the traffic lights down Church Road (there is a station sign), passing shops. At the end either follow the road round to the harbour or turn sharp right up Grecian Terrace to the station. The harbour has a marina planned and views of the Isle of Man, Scotland and down the coast to wind farms at Lowca and Siddick. There is a children's playground.

The station boasts the Harrington hump on the Whitehaven platform, a raised section which is expected to be replicated elsewhere. If you have a bike it will help you getting on the train.