

Copeland Rail Users' Group

Cumbrian coastal line rail walks

Whitehaven – Parton – Harrington

This walk starts from Whitehaven station and goes to Harrington. Alternatives are Whitehaven to Parton, Parton to Harrington and an extension to Workington and beyond. As it almost all follows a national cycle route it is equally good by cycle (which can be carried on the trains). Whitehaven to Parton is about 1½ miles and Parton to Harrington a further 4 miles. Most of it follows two disused railway lines.

In this direction there is a short, steep hill from Parton to Lowca. If you do it in the opposite direction towards Whitehaven there is a steep section on the main road in Harrington.

All trains on the Cumbria coastal line stop at Whitehaven and Workington. Parton and Harrington are request stops – ask the conductor or give a hand signal to the driver. Trains between Carlisle and Whitehaven run roughly hourly, with three on Sundays. South of Whitehaven there is a roughly two hourly service to Barrow with some trains extended to Lancaster and Preston but only a bus service on Sundays.

Come out of **Whitehaven** station on Station Road. Tesco on your right has a café. Just to the right at the end of the road is the Bransty Arch, a Weatherspoons pub that serves food. There are lots of other places to eat and drink in the town which is to your right and well worth exploring. It was the first planned Georgian town in England and has some fine buildings. The harbour area now has a marina. The main tourist attractions are the Beacon museum and gallery on the far side of the harbour and the Rum Story in the main Lowther Street which leads from the harbour to Castle Park, recalling Whitehaven's part in the triangular trade with West Africa and Virginia which brought rum and tobacco to the warehouses of the town. A twenty-minute walk to the other side of the harbour takes you to the Haig Colliery Mining Museum recalling the underground workings which went half way to the Isle of Man. The c2c cycle route to Sunderland and Tynemouth starts from the harbour. Tourist information is in the Market Place where there are also public toilets. 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 immediately left again. You should see the sign for National Cycle Route 72 or Hadrian's Cycleway which we follow to Harrington. This stretches from the Roman fort at Ravenglass to Bowness on Solway, the start of Hadrian's Wall, and on through Carlisle to the northeast. At this point you are also on the Cumbria Coastal Way. This follows the same route through Parton but carries on up the road through

Lowca along a dangerous stretch without a pavement before turning onto paths to Harrington.

The station is to the left of the road. You soon start passing through the remains of William Pit, If you look back over Whitehaven you will see the chimney of Wellington Pit, the site of one of the worst mining tragedies in Britain in 1910 when 136 miners died, on the far side of the harbour, and Whitehaven lighthouse. Beyond is St Bees Head. Out to sea on a clear day you will see the Isle of Man with Snaefell on top and further round to the north the Scottish coast, only 20 miles away.

Just before the first white house on the right at Parton is a millennium milepost telling you it is 1½ miles to Whitehaven and 6 miles to Workington. Shortly afterwards on the left is the first of several archways under the railway leading to the beach (mind your head though!). If you wish you can look at pebbles and shells before returning to the path a little further up the coast. Keeping to the path, you pass the remains of the brickworks on the right.

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

To get to Harrington continue along Main Street which becomes Foundry Road. At the new sewage works on the left the pavement ends for a short distance on this quiet road, following Lowca Beck.

At the T-junction there are two choices. Turn left to continue towards Harrington or right for two hundred yards to St Bridget's Parish Church at Moresby, an interesting Georgian building with medieval remains on the site of Moresby Roman Fort. There is an interpretation panel at the end of the churchyard explaining the layout of the fort. The views from here show the strategic importance of the site. Opposite the church is Moresby Hall, largely designed by Inigo Jones in the seventeenth century though with older parts.

Retrace your steps and climb the steep hill into Lowca, taking the first turning on the right into Stamford Hill that is an uneven road. Bear right at the end keeping the iron gates on your right and follow the cycleway sign. Pass the glasshouses of a flower nursery on the right. The view to the right is over Howgate to Low Moresby with the fells near Loweswater beyond. If you look back the view is of Moresby Church with St Bees Head behind.

You are now on part of what was once the Whitehaven, Cleator and Egremont Railway between Parton and Distington, the last part of which closed in 1973. There are seats along the cycleway, though the stone ones can be wet. Pass kennels on either side of the path, usually with greyhounds in them. The path veers right and under the new bypass by a beck where there is a picnic table. Up the slope from here you will often find horses on the path or in the fields as well as sheep.

The next settlement you see on the right is Common End, the first part of Distington. The first access to Distington itself is just after the floodlights of the rugby league grounds on the right. This leads to the Church of the Holy Spirit and down to the village which has shops, a Co-op and fish and chip shop.

Opposite the flat-topped houses of Barfs Road is a sculpture of a woman and child. More glasshouses can be seen over the grass to the right.

You now reach a junction. To the right is the access road through Ennerdale Terrace and Barfs Road to Distington Toll Bar. The path turns left through the tunnel under the bypass. Again there is a junction. The path to the right leads to Lillyhall Industrial Estate and Lakes College West Cumbria. Turn left towards Harrington. At this point you join another former railway, the Cleator and Workington Junction Railway's line which passes through the former Central station in Workington (as opposed to Workington Main where the current station is).

The path passes under Charity Lane near the golf driving range. You come to High Harrington, mainly passing bungalows. There is a bridge with a separate footbridge after it and supported by a strange corrugated iron structure. If you are going to Harrington turn left here.

If you want to walk further, continue on the path for another 2½ miles to Workington. It takes you into the old Central Station car park. Turn left along Oxford Street past the library and the oldest purpose built bus station in Britain (1926) and carry on for ¼ mile to **Workington** station. Alternatively go straight on to follow the path as far as **Flimby** or **Maryport** stations.

If you are going to **Harrington** station, turn left off the cycle path. There are good views over Workington with Salterbeck in the foreground and Moorclose industrial estate to the right. Up the coast is the Siddick wind farm, just north of Workington. Turn right onto Main Road (A597) and down the hill past the Brewery House pub which serves meals and St Mary's Church to Beckstone Bridge. Turn left at the traffic lights down Church Road (there is a station sign), passing a sandwich shop and other shops and pubs. At the end of the road either follow the road round to the harbour or turn sharp right up Grecian Terrace to the station. The harbour has plans for another marina but also good views over the sea to the Isle of Man and Scotland and along the coast to wind farms at Lowca and Siddick. There is a children's playground here.

The station is notable for the Harrington hump on the Whitehaven platform, a raised section on the very low platform which has proved successful and is expected to be replicated at other stations on the line and elsewhere. If you have a bike it will help you getting on the train.