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Hincaster Trailway



This is one of a series of short walks around the villages of Heversham and Leasgill, near Milnthorpe, Cumbria.

Disclaimer: Walkers are responsible for their own safety, particularly when on public roads, and are asked to observe the country code when crossing farmland.

Starting Point: The Athenaeum village hall on the main village street Leasgill LA7 7ET. The hall has a car park, but this is intended for users of the hall. There is free parking on the surrounding roads.

Terrain: 5.7km / 3.5 miles. Mix of tarmac, pasture and rough track. One short, steep climb, two more gradual climbs.

1 From the Athenaeum, head a short distance north and turn right up the steps onto Mabbinn Hall Lane, going steeply uphill, soon with a large wood on your right.

2 After climbing for some 300 yards, go through a squeeze style on the left, marked with a wooden footpath fingerpost.

This path heads north across a pasture between an avenue of trees until you enter a track, Grievegat Lane, through another squeeze style. Grievegat Lane was originally part of a packhorse route from the South Lakes to Kirkby Lonsdale.



3 Turn left on Grievegate Lane and head downhill for a short distance until you reach another footpath heading off to the right, signed Levens Bridge and Hincaster

Walk parallel to the wood. Down to your left you will see Levens Hall, an Elizabethan House, home to the Bagot family, and beyond that, to the northwest, the village of Levens, the Lyth Valley and, in the distance, the mountains of the central Lake District.



4 The path reaches High Barns dairy farm. Immediately before the farm, take the step style in the stone wall on your right and head uphill.



High Barns farmhouse is grade II listed, with mullioned windows and a greenslate roof. Although there is a plaque above the door dated 1612, it is thought to be early 18th century.

Halfway up the hill, the path passes through a gate and becomes a farm track leading over the top, from which you can see the Howgills around Tebay to the north and the Pennines to the east. The track drops down to a gate

beside Hincaster Hall, a fine grade II* stone house, dating from the early 16th century.

5 The track now becomes a tarmac lane, leading downhill to Harry Brow, the main road through Hincaster village. At the main road, turn right.

Where you turn right, another footpath goes straight ahead up Tunnel Hill. This is the old horse path. Barges on the Lancaster Canal, passing through the Hincaster tunnel, where there is no towpath, were pulled through, using a rope attached to the tunnel side. Meanwhile someone would lead the horse over the top. The tunnel opened in 1819, allowing the canal to reach the gunpowder mills along the River Kent. The canal is now largely dry, but the tunnel portal can be visited on the path leading left behind the new cottages.



6 After 250 yards along Harry Brow, fork left past a grand Victorian house, Beechwood.



The house, now divided into several dwellings, was built in 1856 for the Swinglehurst family, who owned Sedgwick gunpowder works. Their "black powder" was much in demand for mining, quarrying and railway and canal building. The road passes a dairy farm and drops down to a bridge under the West Coast Main Line railway.

Alternative Shorter Route

To reduce the length of the walk to approximately 4km / 2.5 miles, instead of forking left at **6**, continue along Harry Brow until you reach the last cottage on the right. Turn right immediately before the cottage onto a track signed "Footpath to Levens Bridge and Mabbins Hall." This is Pump Lane, the location of the old village pump; this climbs gradually before spitting you out onto an arable field. Follow the same line diagonally across the field to enter horse pastures. The farmer thoughtfully provides a crossing if there is an electric fence. The path will take you to the right of Mabbins Hall farmhouse and drop you on Mabbins Hall Lane at its junction with Grievegate Lane. **9**



7 Before the railway bridge, take the ramp on the right of the road. This is the start of the Hincaster Trailway.

The trailway follows the route of the old railway which ran to Arnside to join the Furness line. The railway was built to carry coke from South Durham to the various iron and steel works at Barrow and along the west Cumbria coast. It also had a local passenger service between Arnside and Kendal, nicknamed the "Kendal Tommy" after one of the regular train crew. It closed in the 1960s and a first 1km section was opened as a footpath and bridleway in 2012 by local community organisations, led by the Hincaster Trailway Group. Interpretation boards and links to oral history of the line are provided. Near the south end of the trailway you pass a development of large modern houses, Viver Green. Continue straight ahead and you soon emerge onto Viver Lane, near some crossroads.



8 At the crossroads turn right over the old railway bridge, and you will pass, set back from the road on your right, Greenside, a large house dating from the 1890s and divided into several dwellings. Continue straight ahead uphill on Mabbins Hall Lane to return to the Leasgill Athenaeum.



End of Walk

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