

Tour 6

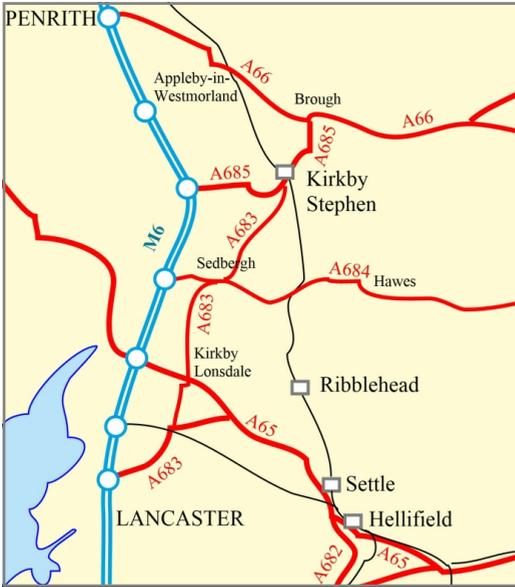
PENNINE RAILWAY STATIONS



Hellifield Station



The Settle-Carlisle line has become a legendary railway. Few can fail to be impressed by the beautiful scenery of the Yorkshire Dales and Northern Pennines through which it passes as well as the drama of the Ribbleshead Viaduct and the charm of its remote stations. This tour following the southern section of the line takes in some of its finest elements and the best of Victorian railway architecture.



The Pennine hills which form the spine of England have long made crossing them an arduous task. The Settle Carlisle Railway was the most ambitious scheme which passed through the area and the drama of its engineering has long endeared it to enthusiasts and tourists alike. This trip through the Yorkshire Dales section visits four of the finest stations in the area. To find them on the ground you will need a more detailed map or a sat nav, especially to reach Ribbleshead.

To find the sites with your sat nav or on Google Maps/ Street View just enter the postcodes listed under each title. There are refreshments available at some stations

The Settle Carlisle Line

Victorian railway companies were often at war with each other. In the 1860's The Midland Railway was the young upstart looking to expand it's services north into Scotland. However it found itself having to use The London & North Western Railway's tracks from where it met the Midland near Settle up to Carlisle via Carnforth and the west coast line. It has been recorded by a number of travellers at the time that the L&NWR would attach the Midland's coaches to slow coal trains to ensure their rivals trains were late. With this in mind the Midland planned to build a railway of its own directly from Settle, over the hills to Carlisle. It was clearly going to be an expensive and difficult route to engineer and despite having a bill passed in Parliament the company were probably relieved when in the middle of a financial crisis their relationship with the L&NWR improved and there was no longer any need to build the Settle Carlisle line.

KIRKBY STEPHEN, CA17 4LE

Standing on a hillside a mile or so to the west of the town this restored station is a fine example of the Midland Railway's corporate style brought to life by the bargeboards which edge its gables and the restored colour scheme.





The Victorians loved their bargeboards. These decorative pieces of wood which finished off the gable ends of roofs were even fitted to old buildings. As a general rule those from the 1850s-70s are the most elaborate with perforated designs like these examples. Those from the 1890s and 1900s tend to have a simple pattern formed as a solid piece.

The Settle Carlisle Line cont...

However the Midland Railway were in for a rude shock. The bill which they passed so they could get permission to build the line also ensured local businesses and other railways which would benefit from its construction that the line would go ahead. So when the Midland applied to Parliament for the abandonment of the scheme they were refused and forced to go ahead with the project. To their credit they approached it with full endeavour ensuring that it was built to a high standard so that it could take express trains to compete with the East and West Coast main lines. This meant major engineering works were undertaken including numerous tunnels and the colossal Ribbleshead Viaduct. Over 6000 men worked over seven years to build the line mainly by hand with shanty towns erected to house them along its route. You can still find remnants of the construction process and the graves of the large number of men who lost their lives through accidents and disease are in local churchyards. When it was complete the Settle Carlisle line proved of some value as relations with the L&NWR had deteriorated again. However the locals who were so keen to see it built weren't so well served as in order to maintain reasonable gradients and a fast route the stations ended up in some cases miles from the towns they were meant to serve.

RIBBLEHEAD VIADUCT AND STATION, LA6 3AS

The most photographed spot on the line is the huge sweeping Ribbleshead Viaduct which carries the railway over Batty Moss. It took over a thousand men five years to build it and the remains of their shanty towns around the viaduct are now a scheduled monument. Over 100 of them lost their lives during construction and there is a memorial at Chapel-le-dale churchyard where they were buried. Their story also inspired the recent TV series *Jericho*. The station stands just to the south of the viaduct giving a commanding view over the area. This beautifully restored building also contains a visitor centre telling the history of the line and the fight to keep it open.



Ribblehead Station



Ribblehead Station was also used as a chapel for the local isolated community with meetings held regularly in the waiting room and music provided by a harmonium hidden in a hole in the wall. The Settle and Carlisle Trust who have restored all the buildings have also renovated the station masters house as a holiday let.



Ribblehead Viaduct

The Settle Carlisle Line cont...

The line was used as the Midland Railway's main express route to Glasgow from its opening in 1875 up until grouping in 1923 when it and the L&NWR became part of the LMS. Now with the West Coast line part of the same company the Settle Carlisle became less important and slowly declined in use such that by 1970 most of the stations were shut and the closure of a line seemed inevitable. There were though numerous voices pointing out that the line had tourist potential as well as value as a diversion when the West Coast Main Line was shut. In 1989 the government refused British Railway's last attempt to shut the line and work began on restoring and upgrading the line. Today this decision had reaped benefits not just for the thousands who visit the area but also because of increased use of the West Coast Main Line means more traffic is diverted along this route.



Settle Station

SETTLE STATION, BD24 9AA

Settle is the southernmost station on the line and is a busy centre along with the attractive little town. The ornate footbridge actually comes from Drem, East Lothian and was moved here in 1993.



HELLIFIELD STATION, BD23 4HN

The finest station in the area however is not actually on the Settle Carlisle itself but is five miles south east. It was built in 1849 but after the Settle Carlisle opened it became a busy junction so was rebuilt with some of the finest Victorian iron and glass canopies anywhere in the country. Their drama is enhanced because the location seems so remote for such an impressive structure. Thanks to heritage groups and volunteers the station has recently been renovated and is a must to visit if you are in the area.





If you would like to discover more about these Victorian railway stations then look out for these two books. They are both packed with photos and drawings explaining in an easy to understand way how they were built, the different styles you can see and the story of the some of the finest. They are available from Amazon, my publisher's website www.countrysidebooks.co.uk and your local bookshop. Go to my website www.trevoryorke.co.uk for more details and to take a look inside each book.

