

Plumpton: Railways and Social History

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Plumpton Hall

Plumpton Hall is a grade II* listed building with a detailed listing in Historic England's website which can be found via the attached link:

<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1158458?section=official-list-entry>

It is rather unkindly described in the Gatehouse Gazetteer as "of little architectural interest" which is a view not unanimously shared. The Gazetteer does however provide an insight into the history of the hall which may be of interest. A link to the website can be found here

<https://www.gatehouse-gazetteer.info/English%20sites/5161.html>

Plumpton Hall is currently a private residence.



Plumpton Hall



Plumpton Hall circa 1898

Farming

Many locals recall how difficult farming was in the area. The land was poor and often flooded. When the railway embankments were built this extended the land available for farming as areas which previously flooded were reclaimed (with compensation paid to the Crown for loss of the seabed). Unfortunately, the reclaimed land was also of poor quality.

For many, mains water was not available until the 1970's with many farms having to pump water from wells/springs. Many recount that the pumps were unreliable resulting in massive problems relating to providing adequate drinking water for the animals as well as the farmers in their farm cottages.

Census records show that many farmers also had other, often full-time, jobs elsewhere. This gives a strong indication that they were unable to earn a living from farming alone.

Levens Viaduct & Railway

The Ulverstone to Lancaster Railway Bill received Royal Assent on the 24th July 1851 and construction of the railway started the same year. The Act itself was a fairly comprehensive document and covered a number of issues including:

- The route of the railway (*which was from Ulverstone to Carnforth not Lancaster*)
- Power to cross certain roads 'on the level'
- The erection of stations and/or lodges at the Points of Crossing
- When bridges are to be erected in lieu of level crossings
- Viaducts of the Leven and Kent Estuaries
- Provision & opening of drawbridges
- Maintenance of tide scales
- Provision of crossing to Winster Bay
- Lights to be exhibited every night during construction of the viaducts and embankments
- Protection of the Port of Ulverstone
- Company to pay for the Guide for Travellers across the Leven Estuary
- Company to construct a footpath for crossing of the Estuary of the Leven
- Compensation for lands drained to be paid to the Crown via Duchy of Lancaster
- Communications with Lancaster and Carlisle Railway
- Powers to take tolls and maximum tolls including for passengers' luggage (*Airlines it would appear did not invent this concept*)
- Compulsory purchase of land
- Sale of Land, including some specifically to the Earl of Burlington (Holker Hall) and powers/rights given to the Earl of Burlington in this regard.

The Act in full can be accessed via the attached link

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukla/Vict/14-15/102/contents/enacted>

A family business

The Ulverstone to Lancaster Railway was promoted by the Brogden family and unusually the railway company was run as a family business. Many of the resources of the business, both materials and labour, were supplied from their own estates.

Route of the Railway

The route of the railway contained in the Railway plan of 1850 showed that over a 25-mile stretch, 7 miles were over water or salt marsh with the rest belonging to 66 separate land owners. There were no set rates for compensation for land bought under compulsory purchase so each plot of land was subject to separate negotiation. These negotiations unsurprisingly were lengthy and took until 1856 to complete.

When the railway was being built there were no connecting railways so all materials had to be brought in by cart or ship. The viaduct required cast iron columns as part of its construction. In order to meet this need locally, a temporary foundry was built on the north side of the canal in 1853 by W & J Galloway.

The railway was to run from Ulverston where the current station now sits to Carnforth where it would join the Lancaster and Carlisle Railway Company. The Furness Railway already reached as far as Ulverston from the Barrow-In-Furness direction but no further. The Furness Railway terminus/station in Ulverston was adjacent to, but separate from, the new Ulverstone and Lancashire Railway station. Passengers had to alight at one station and walk to the other to continue their journey via a set of stone steps. No station buildings were erected by the Ulverstone to Lancaster Railway company in Ulverston prior to the Railway opening to traffic, because they were keen to get money coming in as soon as possible.

Prior to the Furness Railway constructing the current railway station the old Furness Railway buildings contained the ticket office and waiting rooms, with passengers using the stone steps between the two railways to access the platforms for the trains to Lancaster.

The older Furness Railway station and approach was later turned into the goods yard with the old station building latterly being used as a car showroom.

The Ulverstone to Lancashire Railway faced financial difficulties on multiple occasions and delays in construction added to their woes. The Furness Railway came to their rescue by providing a loan of £50,000 (underwritten by the Earl of Burlington and the Duke of Buccleuch) to enable the completion of the construction of the railway. Whilst this might be seen as an altruistic move it should also be noted that both the Earl and the Duke would benefit from the sale of excess land once the railway had been built, as per the act of Parliament.

The Ulverstone to Lancashire Railway company was taken over by The Furness Railway in 1862, the same year they bought the canal. Interestingly, James Ramsden was the Company Secretary for both the Furness Railway and the Ulverstone to Lancaster Railway at this time.

The route of the Ulverstone to Lancaster Railway involved the construction of two viaducts, one over the Leven Estuary and the other over the Kent Estuary. These were ambitious plans as Morecambe Bay had proved to be a significant challenge to engineers and planners in the past, and continued to provide challenges during the building of the railway. George Stephenson in 1837 and John Hague in 1838 had both put different proposals forward for Morecambe Bay crossings, neither of which were taken forward mainly due to the challenges presented by Morecambe Bay itself and the prohibitive costs which would be involved.

James Stelfox

Unusually, a diary has survived of the 'inspector of works' during the building of the railway, James Stelfox. Stelfox was initially employed by the Brogdens as a farmer then later as the 'inspector of works' following a crisis in December 1856. Stelfox was not an engineer. From 1853 James Brunlees was appointed as the Engineer for the railway's construction. Stelfox worked for the Brogden family and his diary illustrates how his railway building responsibilities

had to be balanced with his other duties which were primarily concerned with the husbandry and management of the farms. Indeed, many of the team involved in the building of the railway could, and were, often taken off this job to undertake other jobs on the estates of the Brogdens. Other duties included harvesting, carting manure, selling grain, collecting rents, animal husbandry etc.

Construction around the Leven Viaduct

In order to shorten the crossing length for the viaducts, embankments were built from either side encroaching on the estuary. There was a target of 11 yards a day for embankment construction but Stelfox's diary shows progress nearer to 8 yards a day. Due to the high price of labour and labour shortages 2 wheeled carts were used instead of wheelbarrows. Some materials (eg coal for the lime kiln and steam engine or additional oats for the horses) were shipped in from Liverpool to either Ulverston or Plumpton Pier. Unloading and onward carriage of these materials was often the responsibility of James Stelfox.

The embankment on the Ulverston side of the viaduct extended from the Levens viaduct at Tridley, through Next Ness to the bridge across the canal.

Construction of the viaduct itself

W & J Galloway were the company responsible for the construction of the viaduct with work starting in 1855. The weather and tides hindered progress. Pile driving in particular proved very problematic. The Galloways persevered and developed a system of loosening the sand with high pressure water jets managing to sink some trial piles. Shortly thereafter work began on sinking the permanent piles.

W & J Galloway provided the ironwork required for the viaduct's construction (cast iron piles/columns, wrought iron lattice girders etc) from their temporary foundry located on the side of the Ulverston Canal.

In 1915 the cast iron columns had worryingly deteriorated leading to them being encased in brickwork and concrete to strengthen and preserve them. This work had to be undertaken on both the Leven and Kent (also known as Arnside) viaducts using the same methodology for "bricking in".



Arnside viaduct bricking same process for Leven viaduct

Indeed, the viaduct continues to provide challenges to engineers who continue to overcome them in inventive ways. In 2006 the engineers responsible for maintenance on the viaduct devised an innovative track and gantry system to lift out the old viaduct deck and bring in the new steel deck units. This solution won a prestigious engineering award.

(<https://www.networkrailmediacentre.co.uk/news/viaduct-project-wins-engineering-award#>).



Levens Viaduct

Levens Viaduct drawbridge.

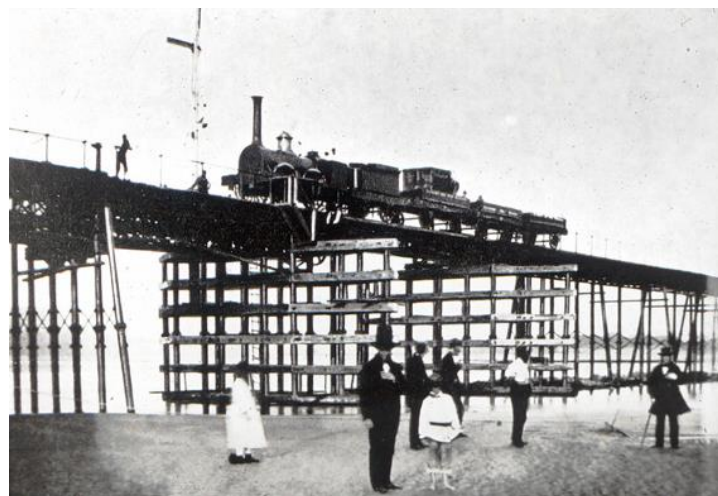
Part of the conditions for the building of the Levens viaduct, as set out in the Act of Parliament, were that the estuary to Greenodd must remain navigable. How this was achieved was recorded in the **Soulby's Ulverston Advertiser on 3rd December 1903**, quoting an earlier article in the Manchester Examiner.

The Drawbridge on the Leven Viaduct. The 'Manchester Examiner' says: - "We recently had the opportunity of examining a neat model, embodying a design for a railway drawbridge which promises many advantages over the ordinary drawbridge. The design by Mr James Brunlee, civil engineer, of Manchester, is about to be carried into effect on the Ulverstone and Lancaster Railway, where the line crosses the navigable estuary of the Leven, near Ulverston. The estuary being exposed to high winds and having strong tides running through it, necessitated the adoption of a structure whose light character would present the least resistance to the force of the winds and the occasional lash of the waves; while at the same time the moveable part of the bridge should be of sufficient span to admit the passage of vessels, combined with ample strength to support a railway train. The roadway of the drawbridge, which will be placed in an iron viaduct, is for a single line of rails, resting on pillar constructed of iron piles. The water way for the vessels will be 36ft wide, to be spanned by a moveable platform. The bridge will be opened by causing it to glide under the fixed roadway on one side of the opening, thus forming a kind of telescope bridge. The advantages contemplated in this design are, small expense at first cost, with the great facility of opening and shutting, and no extra provision being required for foundations, the moveable platform weighing only about 13 tons."

"The drawbridge was said to have been designed to be operated by "one man and a boy".

The drawbridge had fairly set times in which it could be operated organised around high water times. This will have presented a challenge to those trying to maintain a railway timetable given the tide times change each day.

The opening section of the viaduct can be seen on the c1857 Cumbria Railways Association photograph showing the Contractors 0-4-0 loco, contractor's train on the opening span of the viaduct.



Train on opening span of viaduct circa 1857

Permanent closure of the drawbridge

The drawbridge opening on the Levens viaduct was closed for good in 1869. This followed various options for transporting goods from Greenodd to Ulverston Canal being considered. One option was for there to be a second canal between the existing Ulverston Canal and Greenodd (this option had been the subject of various newspaper articles since the 1840s), another option was for the Furness Railway company to build a rail connection between the canal basin and Greenodd with special reduced rates to be applied. This latter option was agreed with the Furness Railway in 1866 paving the way for the permanent closure of the drawbridge.

Disruption to the railway service as a result of opening the drawbridge was captured in an article in the **Ulverston Mirror and Furness Reporter on 17th September 1870**. *“The Plumpton Viaduct. – A few days ago the 9.35 train from Ulverston, going south, was delayed half an hour at the Plumpton Viaduct on account of the bridge being opened to allow the passage of a vessel. We understood that when the line to Greenodd was completed this draw-bridge would be permanently closed, but the Company appears to be taking its time in the matter. When the bridge was in working order ten minutes sufficed to close it, but in consequence of infrequent use the machinery of the bridge has become rusty and difficult to work. Whatever is done in the matter the public has to suffer, their convenience being the last thing considered.”*

Opening of the Railway

The railway was finally opened for goods traffic on the 10th August 1857 and for passengers on the 1st September 1857.

The railway was opened to both passenger and freight traffic before the station buildings were erected in order to start generating income as early as possible. Interestingly, the first train across the Kent viaduct was made up of an engine and 7 trucks, all loaded with Mr A Brogden's furniture.

The formal opening of the railway was celebrated by around 300 guests of the directors at Furness Abbey with about 550 workmen celebrating at Lightburn Park.

Early success of the railway

Stelfox's diary shows various excursions in 1858 including:

24 May Trip from Whitehaven to Lancaster for about 1,400 people

25 May Trip from Preston to Silverdale, Grange, Ulverston of about 3,000 people (all went well)

23 July Grand temperance demonstration at Swarthmoor. About 6,000 people present.

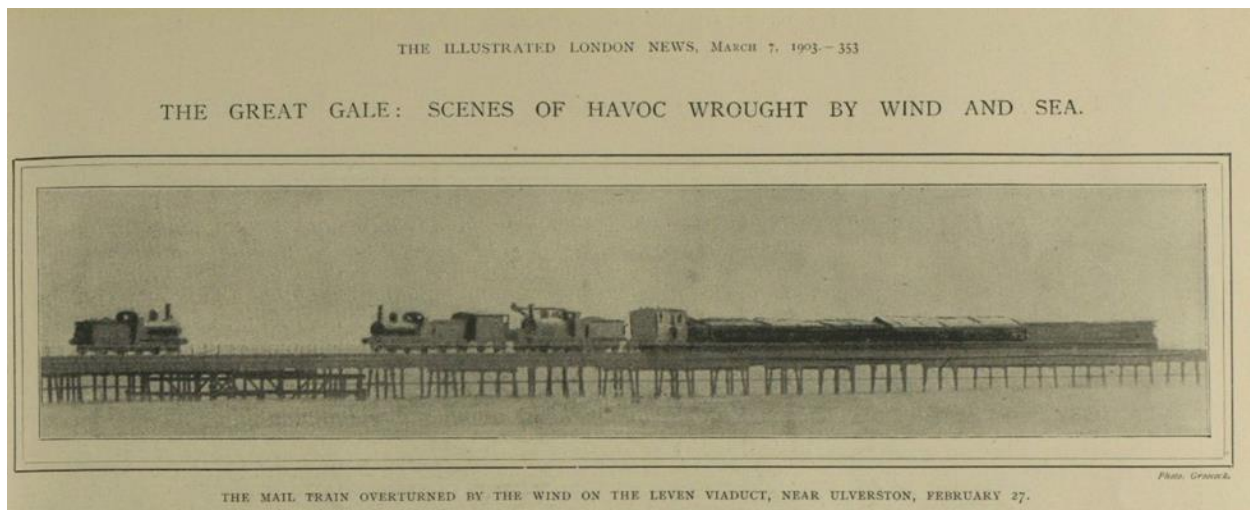
There is some uncertainty about how many people actually attended the Temperance demonstration as nearly 3,000 people were recorded as having visited Furness Abbey ruins on the same day.

Accidents involving shipping and the viaduct

On the 24th April 1857 the viaduct was struck by the Lady Jane, a ship from Liverpool, which was using the spring tides to run up to Greenodd. The ship severely damaged 4 of the columns (piles) below the water delaying the completion of the viaduct.

During July of the same year another vessel ran up against the viaduct causing damage which, combined with slips on the embankment near Ulverston Canal, meant the railway was not able to open in time for the Assizes on the 5th August.

Railway accident on the viaduct February 27th 1903



1903 overturned train on viaduct

The early morning Carnforth to Whitehaven mail train was blown over by exceptionally high winds. The train had come to a stop on the viaduct after fallen telegraph wires dislodged the engine's brake hose, destroying the vacuum and applying the brake. All the passengers and some of the crew were injured but there were no fatalities. Three passengers were initially thought to have been missing, presumed trapped or blown into the estuary and drowned as their hat boxes and luggage were found on the train but the passengers could not be located. It later transpired that they had alighted at Carnforth for refreshments but had missed the train's departure. In the days of steam, it was not unusual for a longer stop at certain railway stations to be included to enable the taking on of water and sometimes coal for the locomotives. This also allowed passengers to obtain refreshments for themselves during this time.

The accident was widely reported.

Edinburgh Evening News, Monday 2nd March, 1903 *THE TRAIN ACCIDENT IN FURNESS.*

The people injured in the railway accident on the Leven Viaduct are all doing well. Mrs Goad, of the Vulcan Hotel, Askam, who sustained injuries to the spine, has been removed home with her daughter. Mr A. Sansom, of Barrow, is still in the Ulverston Cottage Hospital with a rather severe scalp wound and injury to the hand. The other two passengers who were detained at the Leven cottages, and also the guard, Kelly, have returned home. The passengers all regard their escape from death as most marvellous. The Board of Trade have appointed Major Druitt, R.E., to inquire into the circumstances attending the accident that occurred on the Furness Railway on Friday last through the overturning of a passenger train on the Leven Viaduct.

The damage to property at Furness is estimated at £10,000.

The Board of Trade issued its report into the accident on 13th March 1903, a timeframe unimaginable today. The report on the accident was written by Lieutenant Colonel E Druitt is held in the Railways Archive <https://www.railwaysarchive.co.uk/eventssummary.php?eventID=70>

The Penrith Observer 5th May 1903; *“The Levens Viaduct Disaster. It is reported that 24 claims for compensation have been sent in to the Furness Railway Company by passengers who were injured in the recent accident on the Levens Viaduct by the overturning of a train in a gale of wind. The company in each case have replied that they are not liable, as the accident occurred not through any fault of theirs, but was an act of God.”*

An ingenious instrument – wind pressure

Warrington Examiner 18 February 1905; *An investigation took place to establish the cause of the accident and to identify what needed to be done to help prevent a re-occurrence. The solution found was extensively reported. “During the great gale on February 27th 1903 a mail train was blown over on the Levens Viaduct, on the Furness Line, and almost fell into the sea. The Furness Company, in order to prevent similar accidents, have now erected an ingenious instrument which will automatically warn signalmen when there is unusual wind pressure. The apparatus consists of a combined wind pressure gauge and recorder, and is connected with an electric arrangement, by means of which bells are set in motion at distant signal-cabins. These bells will continue to ring so long as the velocity of the wind on the viaduct is dangerous to passing trains.”*

There are very few images of what the ‘ingenious instrument’ looked like. The Cumbria Railway Association images below show the device that was located on the western end of the viaduct. Two different sides of the device can be seen in the photographs giving a clearer idea of how it was constructed. The photograph taken from on the viaduct, looking east, shows the cottages at the west end of the viaduct (where hot water was provided for those spending their leisure time at Tridley), the platelayer building to the right and to the left of the photograph you can see the wind device in situ.



Wind pressure plate @ west end of viaduct



West end of viaduct showing cottages and wind speed indicator to left of cottages

Public Right of Way?

When the Ulverstone to Lancaster Railway Act was passed for the construction of the Railway this included the building of the Levens Viaduct. An additional requirement was for a footpath alongside the viaduct to be made to replace the previously available ford, at low tide, between Tridley and the Cark side of the estuary. The viaduct was to be built across the route of the previously available ford so a replacement safe crossing was to be provided. The previous crossing reduced the journey between Ulverston and Cark by about 12 miles, which was very significant when most journeys were made on foot. This public footpath was never constructed by the Railway company but this did not stop people from using the railway viaduct itself as a public right of way instead. As a result of many accidents calls were made to try to force the railway company to provide the footpath as required in the original act but they were not successful. Indeed, to this day, every time any work is done on the viaduct the subject of a footpath is raised again.

It is impossible to say how many people safely crossed the viaduct on foot as no records of this were kept. However, it is believed that this practise was widespread. This impression is supported by historic newspaper articles reporting the use of the viaduct as a public crossing was common practise and was generally considered 'safe'. Unfortunately, there were many casualties, some fatal. Having said that, the number of casualties resulting from people crossing the viaduct was said to have been significantly lower than when people crossed the bay on foot prior to the viaduct being built.

An example of discussions around the public right of way - or not - over the viaduct was captured in an article in the **Lancashire Evening Post of 21st May 1903**. *"The Right of Way over Leven Viaduct". Decision of Ulverston Magistrates. The old question of right of way over Leven Viaduct was raised at the Ulverston Magistrates' Court, this morning, when two young fellows, named Robert Wilcock and W H Nicholas were charged with trespassing on the Furness Railway nears Ravensbarrow, while walking from Ulverston to Cark. W E Farna, signalman, said he warned the defendants they were trespassing. – Mr Pool, for the defendants, pleaded that it was the duty of the railway company to make a footpath across Leven Viaduct and to provide proper approaches according to the Ulverston and Lancaster Railway Act of 1851. If the railway company did not fulfil their obligation his clients were entitled to use the line. He had crossed the viaduct scores of times himself, and had never been stopped. – Mr Hodgson, a magistrate, said people going from Ulverston to Cark have to cross the viaduct, and cannot get off the line before they get to Cark. – Mr Fell, chairman of the Bench, said the Bench were not unanimous, but the majority were in favour that a trespass was committed, and defendants would be fined half-a-crown and costs."*

A further example was in an article in the **Soulby's Ulverston Advertiser of 4th July 1912**. *"At the monthly sitting of our City Fathers on Tuesday, quite a variety of topics of more or less importance cropped up for discussion, the most interesting, perhaps, being with regard to the rights of the public over the Leven Viaduct of the Furness Railway Company. The Clerk (Mr F W Poole), in accordance with his instructions at the previous Council meeting presented a report as to the liability of the railway company, under a section in the Ulverston and Lancaster Railway Act, to construct and maintain for the use of foot passengers a safe and convenient low-water footpath with proper access to and from the sands, in substitution for the ford which existed*

before the construction of the railway, the crossing being subject to the toll of one halfpenny per head. In reply to the question of the right of the public to cross the Leven Viaduct Mr Poole expressed the opinion that persons so crossing are legally speaking, trespassers, and therefore in using the viaduct they do so entirely at their own risk. The Urban Council, I think is admitted, is the proper authority to look after the rights and interests of the public, but assuming the Railway company decide to carry out the obligation thrown upon them by the section quoted, the question arises whether the public would not be in a much worse position than heretofore, seeing that the footpath to be constructed would be only available at low water, whereas at the present time the public are practically permitted to cross the viaduct at all states of the tide. That with reasonable care the crossing may be effected without personal danger is, I think, pretty well admitted by those who have been in the habit of crossing frequently, but persons who are prone to nervousness and apt to 'lose their heads' when trains are coming at the same time in opposite directions are much safer away. No doubt the circumstances of the case would best be met by the construction of a side bridge or footway above the high-water level, but, of course, there is no legal liability upon the Railway Company to do something which their Act of Parliament does not require them to do. I agree with Councillor Dilworth that the question is a much bigger than it looks at the first blush, and the council has certainly taken the wisest step by appointing a special committee to consider the whole question, with power to interview the representatives of the Railway Company if necessary."

Tridley and Levens Viaduct Deaths

The Manchester Evening News of 15th April 1905. Knocked down by a Railway Engine.

A Hebden Bridge stonemason named Jackson Wear, aged about fifty was yesterday taking the short cut across the Levens Viaduct, between Cark and Grange, when in stepping out of the way of one train at the sound of the whistle he came in front of the engine of a train on the opposite line, and was killed instantaneously. He was identified by letters from his sister, Mrs D Horsfall, Albion Terrance, Hebden Bridge.

Daily Telegraph – Courier London 24 August 1899 - An Obstinate Jury.

"Coroners' juries are proverbially somewhat dense and have on many occasions shown a strong determination to form their own conclusions and not to accept the ruling of the officer presiding over the Court. Mr J Poole, the coroner for Lonsdale, has just had to deal with such a jury, and to concert measures to counteract their vagaries in the future. At an inquest on a farm labourer, named Thomas Dacre, who was found, after a drinking bout, lying unconscious on the railway, having fallen from the Levens Viaduct, some 14 ft above, the coroner directed the jury to find a verdict of death from delirium tremens. The jury refused, and favoured accidental death. The inquest was adjourned. At the next sitting Dr Bowman said neither the fall nor the effects of alcohol would have killed the man separately, but both contributed to it. The jury, however, persisted in a verdict of accidental death, and the coroner, remarking that he would not have his inquests turned into farces, directed the police in future to summon twenty-three jurors to every inquest in Ulverston".

Plumpton Junction

Plumpton Junction was originally designed as part of the Ulverstone and Lancaster Railway later incorporated into the Furness Railway. Over the years however the junction was expanded to provide access to:

The Bardsea Branch which opened in 1883, serving the industrial areas around the canal, then onward to Conishead Priory serving the Conishead Priory Hydropathic Mansion (hotel). The branch line was initially envisaged to continue on to Bardsea with the possibility of extending this as far as Barrow-in-Furness but construction past Conishead was never completed. As a part of wartime economy measures the passenger services to Conishead Priory were withdrawn in July 1916. The section between Glaxo and Plumpton was officially closed in 1994. An innovative piece of engineering on this branch line was the 'rolling bridge' which crossed the canal. Illustrations on how this worked are located at the bridge on the canal.

There was only direct access to the Bardsea Branch for trains travelling from the east (Carnforth). For trains travelling from Ulverston the locomotives had to uncouple at Plumpton Junction, run round the carriages, then recouple for the journey to Conishead. This manoeuvre had to be done in reverse for the return journey.



Railway view towards Bardsea and Ulverston



*Train from Lakeside at Plumpton Junction with banking engine on the right
(Michael Andrews photo)*

Construction of the Newby Bridge Branch was started in 1866 and opened to railway traffic in 1869, with the last passenger train in the late 1960s. It was initially envisaged that the railway would terminate at Newby Bridge however this was later extended to Lakeside. Whilst there is no longer any main line access through to Lakeside, part of the branch survives as a heritage steam railway between Lakeside and Haverthwaite.

There were a number of quarries and mines at Plumpton, whose history is covered elsewhere within this heritage project, which were also served by railways which linked to the main line at Plumpton Junction. This aerial photograph from 1930 captures the limestone quarries, the railway, Plumpton Hall and is a rare picture capturing Plumpton Pier. The second photograph showing Plumpton pier in the distance is taken from Canal Foot.



Plumpton Viaduct with the remains of Plumpton Pier in the foreground



Plampton Shore now



Pier in distance

A photographer on a passing train captured a derailment at the catchpoint at Plumpton Junction. To the right of the signal box you can see the branch leading to the quarry.



Derailed at catchpoint at Plumpton Junction (showing branch to quarry on right)

Several sidings were also located at Plumpton Junction. The banking engines were located here for providing additional power for trains going over Lindal bank towards Dalton-In-Furness.

The junction was for a significant number of years a hive of activity covering all of the different branches and support infrastructure (including the wind gauge alarm) but is now limited to the mainline between Ulverston and Carnforth.



Plumpton Junction now



Plumpton junction

Tridley

Tridley lies nestled behind the Leven Viaduct on the edge of Morecambe Bay. It can be accessed today on foot via the public footpath from Plumpton. Tridley is shown in various records as Tridley, Treadlea, Threadlow, Tridler, Treadallow and Treillea. (I have left the different spellings as per the original information provided/seen). Tridley is now a very quiet spot but this wasn't always the case. Up until the 1980s it was a 'go to' location for locals to spend their leisure time and even to holiday there as part of a family group or as a group of friends.

Many locals have fond recollections of their leisure time at Tridley but many also reflect that what was acceptable in terms of risk then certainly isn't acceptable today.

Morecambe Bay is well known for its tidal bores and quicksands making it a dangerous place to fish, swim and play. Many a person were swept out to sea and there are numerous accounts of them being pulled out of the water away from danger, including my own brother in law. Sadly, there were also numerous fatalities. Despite the dangers Tridley remained a popular place for recreation.

Tridley as a recreational destination was not well documented, apart from being the location in newspaper articles recording many tragedies, so this section predominantly records people's personal memories.



Tridley, people and cars



Tridley now

Various recollections:

Getting there:

- We went there a lot as children and think that one family lived down there in their Bedford camper van.
- I remember cycling down there and I remember the current was quite strong. I never liked watching people jumping and diving off the viaduct it looked too dangerous.
- Only thing with Tridley was it was a long walk from Croftlands, but the walk down the lanes was half the fun
- I remember Teddy Jackson giving us a lift once on the back of his coal lorry
- Preston North used to sweep his coal wagon and anyone who wanted a lift to Tridley he would pick up at Tank Square for 2d. By the time they got there they were covered in coal dust.
- Have happy memories of holidays on the beach there. It was a long walk down and weary walk back but good times.
- The Farmer blocked off the way under the Railway Bridge so cars couldn't get up the field. The place was packed out in the summer and police were needed to co-ordinate the parking. Sadly, all gone now.
- We used to go 'over' the bridge across the railway line, bit naughty really



Tridley. Bill Hutchinson, Dennis Porter, Ray Preston, Kenny Fell

What we did when we were there:

- Every summer we used to take the caravan down to Tridley and spend the whole summer holidays down there. As kids we used to go part way across the viaduct as the tide rushed in, jump in the water and let the tide carry us round the point.
- Our family went to Tridley every year, dogs and all. Used to put two tents up. Go for hot water from the signal box for our tea. Walked the sands as soon as the tide went out.
- We used to camp there in the school holidays, although we did go home for Sunday lunch.
- Tridley looked like Marbella when we went there in the 50s there wasn't any windbreaks or sunloungers. Dad used to take the seats out of the car and put them on the grass.
- Do you remember our flock treading adventures? Taking turns to dive for each other's trodden flooks when the water was too deep to retrieve our own without floating off them. Then having to shoulder charge each other off the flock once it was firmly in our grasp
- I remember the summer of 1976 my dad got his thumb crushed in a railway wagon door. I can still see him swimming at Tridley with one hand out of the water in a Sunblest bag to keep it dry.
- Swimming in the tide and treading for flukes just before the tide came in. A piece of stiff wire with a string attached to feed through the gills and tie them to your trunks while you treaded for more. Keeping a look out for the tidal bore so you could get out before it hit you.
- Brilliant times. I used to scream my head off if I stood on a fluke, we all had that fear of the tide coming in.
- Remember it well. Whole family and friends down there for the day. Surround ourselves with windbreakers and laughed at the adults trying to get changed without exposing themselves. The sandy sarnies were another memory.
- Learnt to swim in the currents down there. Good memories.
- Our family spent their holidays down there and my Dad's family spent their summers there.

- I remember camping down there, making quicksand and seeing who was brave/daft enough to stay stuck in it the longest when the tide came in and a cow ate my whole tent.
- I remember a thunderstorm starting when we were there and a young lad of about 7 had been left there with an inflatable dinghy. My dad helped him get behind the wall with the dinghy over him whilst we waited for his parents to return.
- My father and I used to walk halfway along the viaduct then climb down a ladder to get to a good fishing spot. No dad would take a 9-year-old on summat like that now.
- We only went occasionally. I think dad had pulled too many from being swept under the viaduct! So it was normally North Scale for us.
- I remember going up and down the iron ladder (on the viaduct) just for a dare! It was terrifying and that's also when I realised I was frightened of heights, never thought about it before. Good days though
- What fantasy summer holidays we had there, although I nearly drowned and was saved by a man who spotted me heading towards the viaduct
- There was a fresh water spring at Tridley point, some distance up from the viaduct. We used to camp right next to it in the 1940s.
- I remember the spring also and what we called golden sands at the point
- loved it there from probably about 1970 every sunny weekend, we even had a tent down there one summer and my Dad went to work at Ashleys every morning came back at tea time
- We spent our childhood there as well as Bardsea treading for flook well screaming when i stood on 1 is more likely i tried to be so brave but when u felt 1 wriggle under your feet it was the weirdest feeling my natural instinct was to jump and scream but as my brothers used to say when i did that was well she is a girl it's what girls do I so wanted to prove them wrong
- I remember watching lads jump from the span on the viaduct and one time being part of a human chain to pull a lad in who was trying to swim against the tide.
- We used to camp & make fires with anything found from the railway, Old sleepers / 45-gallon drums of diesel... These fires burned for days. We would have enough food for about 4/5 days & then become partial to fluke sandwiches with all the treading, Fantastic memories
- Always went there in a big group, camped for weeks once in a caravan even took the cat and the budgie....also took a big tent once think we ended up with about 14 of us in it one night good times and lots of memories.....mushrooming in the fields and catching fish, there was a big storm one day ,we could see it coming across the bay and we all had to sit inside the tent and hold it down till it stopped
- From Easter right through the summer, bike or walk in a gang, sneak across the railway line if it was too muddy under the bridge! used to go treading for flukes too with my brother...happy days
- remember getting stuck the other side of the channel, the tide coming in and having to walk back over the viaduct in pouring rain, a train came as we were in the centre and it literally shook, so scary but still alive to tell the tale
- football, swim, football, swim, picnic, football swim, football swim, not a mobile in sight



Children at Tridley



Bridge round the point at Tridley



Sanders family at Tridley



Postlethwaite family and friends Tridley



Leonard Harrison and Audrey at Tridley c 1940s



Friends at Tridley

Food and drink:

- We used to go to 'Moss Lea' for ice-cream and sweets
- We used to take a little camping stove with us and do sausages, bacon egg etc. Brilliant, those were the days
- We used to go to a house at Canal Foot where they'd fill flasks up. They used to sell bags of crisps, sweets and ice-cream too.
- My dad used to get Mrs Haddow (resident of railway cottage) to book water for tea, can't remember what he paid but quite a few did it.
- Used to get a big pot of hot water for about 6d (2.5 pence) from Mrs Haddow at the Railway cottage at the end of the viaduct
- Used to get hot water from the railway cottage at the end of the viaduct. They had no mains water down there so the train used to drop off milk kits of fresh water for them



Christina and Derek Woodburn with Miley Haddow c1950

Sad Recollections:

- My dad told me about some boys that were pulled out who had drowned while he was there he knew the boys and said how sad it had made him he remembers a priest coming down and praying over them think they'd maybe being given the last rites but as a boy dad wasn't sure hence we never went in while the tide was in he wouldn't let us I just remember being allowed in when the tide had gone out I didn't know about dad's experience until a few years ago so I realise why I wasn't allowed in now
- I was unlucky to see a young lad drown right in front of me his friends said he could swim he went under never saw him again looked all over for him but no luck he was found the next day he had been washed against the rocks poor lad about 1964-65

Living there (Bill Haddow)

My mother and father Molly and Miley Haddow were the last people to live at the house at Tridley. I've fond memories of my mother making pots of tea for all the people who had come for the day to swim in the tide and kids would play in the sand.

Also, memories of a family who decided to camp on the shore top on the grass, they were told by my father that it wasn't a good idea to pitch their tent on the grass for there was going to be a big tide that night as tides were rising. They all got damp sleeping bags in the night and quickly moved onto the top part of the grass.

The house never had mains water. Every day the old steam train would drop off a couple of milk kits full of fresh water. The engine driver would trade his big lumps of coal for a bag of flukes.

Many good memories of living at Tridley like the big freeze in 1963 when all the ice was piled around the viaduct openings and couldn't get through. When the tide came in again off it all went towards Greenodd as the tide turned, back it came. Eventually it broke up and off it went.

The cottage where Bill and his family lived can be seen on the left of this photograph. Very few remnants of the buildings remain. Please see the photo showing the remains of the platelayer hut which can be seen on the right of the earlier photo.



West end of viaduct showing cottages and wind speed indicator to left of cottages



Remains of plate layer hut by viaduct

Newspaper articles:

The Dundee Evening Telegraph of 22nd August 1935 records “Children See Mother Drown, Men’s Gallant Rescue Efforts Fail.

Despite gallant rescue attempts by two young men, Mrs Helen Herrington, wife of Thomas Herrington, Of Stanley Street, Ulverston was swept to her death in the Leven Viaduct at the entrance to Morecambe Bay. Her four children, twins aged nine and a boy of seven and a girl of five were witnesses of the tragedy. Mrs Herrington had left her children on the estuary shore while she went bathing. She immediately got into difficulties in the strong currents and hearing her calls for help, John Gifford (24) of Baily Street, Ulverston, went to her assistance.

He was twice pulled under the water, and, was himself in danger of drowning until James Park (22) of Dale Street, Ulverston, pushed him towards the bank. When Park tried to save Mrs Herrington, however, he was carried with her into the estuary. He struggled to reach one of the viaduct pillars, but both were swept into the Ulverston Channel, which runs into Morecambe Bay. Here Park lost hold of the woman, and the tide washed them apart. He was carried towards a rock on the Ulverston side of the viaduct, and was able to get out, but Mrs Herrington was lost in sight of the crowd which had gathered on the estuary shore.

Mrs Herrington’s body was discovered later on the shore at Goadsbarrow, on the Furness side of Morecambe Bay, several miles from the Leven Viaduct where she disappeared.”

Lancashire Evening Post 28th May 1912 records “Leven Viaduct Tragedy. Ulverston Man’s sad death on holiday.

A sad tragedy occurred on the Leven Viaduct of the Furness Railway yesterday, an Ulverston printer, named Frederick Thomas Fennell, being struck by a passenger train and drowned in the estuary of the Leven.

It appears that Fennell had arranged with his wife and family to spend the holiday on the shores of the Leven estuary, and he left home about ten o'clock in the morning and joined two other men. The three then crossed the viaduct and commenced fishing. Later Mrs Fennell and family arrived at the Plumpton side of the viaduct, and Fennell left his friends to join his wife and family at lunch on the shore.

This over, Fennell was recrossing the viaduct in order to join his male friends, when the 12.20 pm special passenger train from Barrow to Cark overtook him. He was stuck on the head by the engine buffer, and fell through the side rail of the viaduct into the estuary below. The train was stopped, but Fennell could not be seen.

Police-Sergt. Appleby and Mr P Butler obtained a rowing boat and grappling irons, and commenced dragging the channel, but it was not until 3.30 pm that Fennell's body was recovered, some 50 yards from where he had fallen into the water.

It was a most distressing affair and aroused much sympathy for the widow and family, not only at Ulverston, but amongst the huge crowds leaving Cartmel Races, who had had the news brought to them by those who had been travelling by the train from Barrow to Cark.

Lancashire Evening Post – 28th June 1943. Three drowned, one rescued at Ulverston.

Three bathers were drowned in the estuary of the Rivers Crake and Leven near the Leven viaduct, Ulverston yesterday afternoon. They were Mary Elizabeth Wicks (16) clerk of The Green, Lindal-In-Furness; Kenneth Marshall (16) labourer, of London Road, Lindal in Furness, Agnes Dunn (12) of Cobden Street, Dalton in Furness. Joyce A Jordan (16) of Dalton Road, Lindal In Furness, was with them and was rescued by William Smith (18) of Low Mill near Ulverston and Harry Kipling (18) of The Cottage, Conishead Priory, Ulverston.

Other bathers including soldiers, tried repeatedly in vain to save the three victims. They got out of their depth apparently in a 'pot hole' in the channel about 25 to 30 yards from the shore and disappeared. Two bodies were recovered by the police yesterday and the third early this morning.

Ulverston Mirror and Furness Reflector – Saturday 28 June 1884

EXCITING SCENE AT SANDSIDE, ULVERSTON

NARROW ESCAPE FROM DROWNING

On Sunday evening a most exciting scene was witnessed at Sandside, Ulverston. The evening being fine, a number of people were standing on the pier at the Canal Foot and also walking on the shore, awaiting to see the incoming tide, which was to be a very high one.

For some time, the guide over the sands and others on the pier had been watching a man cross from the direction of Cark towards the Canal Foot with the evident intention of crossing the channel at that point. There was some anxiety lest he might not be able to cross before the approach of the tide. At 8.30, however, he reached the channel just in front of the Pier, while the tide was several hundred yards off, and he might have crossed in safety and was shouted to by the people on the pier to do so. He, however, perhaps terrified by the sight of the water or the

noise of the approaching tide, made no attempt to cross, but stood still or ran up and down the side of the channel.

The tide was soon very close to him and the excitement amongst the people on the shore was intense. They shouted to him to go back to the embankment on the Cark side of the Viaduct, and had he done this all the subsequent anxiety would have been obviated. Instead of doing so, however, he ran along the channel towards Plumpton, followed on the shore by Doctor Robinson in his trap, who kept up a continual whistle, aided by a number of men, who shouted to him to wait for a boat that was being pushed out at the Canal Foot. The boat was got into the water and rowed up the channel at a tremendous speed and would soon have picked him off but that the man seemed determined on his own destruction and to get away from all assistance. Opposite Plumpton three men had been watching his movements from the beginning. One of these had divested himself of his clothing, and the other two were doing so. This man ran down to the water's edge, and shouted to him to cross there, and that they would assist him, or to wait for the boat which was fast approaching. But he seemed thoroughly bewildered, paid no heed to what was said and dashed along.

Further on he entered the water as if to cross, but soon turned back and ran along in the direction of the embankment, which he was directed to at first, but the tide was now fast surrounding him, and he was soon compelled to alter his course and run in the direction of the viaduct. From the shore the whole of the sands seemed to be covered with the tide, and the only chance of escape appeared to be in climbing the viaduct, and this it was expected he intended to do, when a white figure – that of the man who had divested himself of his clothing, was seen to descend one of the columns half way, but to reascend immediately. A number of men were now running along the viaduct and the man on the sands was lost to sight for a few seconds.

When seen again he was running along close to the viaduct in the direction of the embankment, which he reached and climbed up, followed so closely by the tide that in a few seconds longer, there is little doubt, he would have been dashed against the bridge or swept away with the tide. When picked up he seemed utterly exhausted. Doctor Robinson was on the spot to render assistance, if necessary, but the man soon recovered sufficiently to move out of the way, which he did across the fields towards Greenodd, though it seems Ulverston was the point he was making for, but nothing would induce him to venture on the sands again. It was marvellous how such aged man – evidently a tramp - got over so much ground in so short a time.

1867 - Barrow Herald and Furness Advertiser – Saturday 20 April 1867

DEATH BY DROWNING AT ULVERSTON

Considerable excitement has been caused in Ulverston by the melancholy death of Mr. Braithwaite Parker, a young man of about 21 years of age, the second son of Mr. John Parker, grocer of that town, who was found drowned in a large sheet of water from the abandoned ore pits at Plumpton, about a mile from Ulverston.

It appears that the deceased has been in a low and desponding state of mind for some time, and that his absence from home caused a deal of anxiety during the latter part of last week. He was last seen walking towards Plumpton, and his hat was found floating on the water there. Two boats, with men employed during the whole of Sunday, in searching and trying to grapple for the body of the deceased, but without success, through inequalities at the bottom caused by the shafts of the old pits which were abandoned through the force of the water. The deceased was

supposed to have thrown himself down the shafts of one of the ore pits; and it was deemed best to procure a diver from Liverpool with apparatus, as used in the Regents Park calamity. The diver arrived in Ulverston on Monday evening and a renewed search for the deceased commenced on Tuesday morning. The diver, after fitting the diving dress and apparatus, was not more than four minutes before he found the body of the deceased lodged under the shelving of a rock. He attached a rope round the body, and it was drawn up to the top of the pit and conveyed home.

This sad even has caused a general gloom throughout the town. An inquest was held on Wednesday before W. Butler, Esq; and a verdict returned was 'Found dead.'

Bolton Evening News – Tuesday 30 July 1901

THE EXPLOSION AT ULVERSTON - PRECAUTIONS RECOMMENDED

The inquest on Richard Thistlethwaite and Samuel Ackrigg, who were killed by an explosion at Plumpton Quarry, Ulverston, was resumed on Monday, before Mr Coroner Poole. Evidence was given by Richard Balderstone to the effect that Ackrigg was using an iron bar for a 'stemmer,' which was all they had for the purpose.

Mr Hedley (Inspector) pointed out that the Government regulation stated that 'no iron or steel tool shall be used for charging or stemming a hole with an explosive.' Witness added that instead of carrying the powder up to the rock in barrels they emptied it into a linen bag, and then covered it with a rough bag. The Inspector said the Government regulation was: "All explosives shall be conveyed from the magazine to the quarry and kept till used in secure packages, so made and enclosed as to prevent any escape from the explosive and any dangers from sparks." William Irving, foreman, said they always used the iron rod for stemming. For 20 years they had used a similar rod at the Gasgow Quarry. The jury found "That the deceased lost their lives by an explosion of gunpowder caused by using an iron rod, instead of using a copper rod or stick, for ascertaining the depth of the powder. And, looking to the fact that these men wore clogs or nails in their boots, great care should be exercised in conveying powder to the surfaces of the rock, and that proper vessels should be provided for carrying the powder. The jury thinks that the foreman should be thoroughly conversant in the duties and regulations throughout, in accordance with the provisions of the act.

Lancashire Evening Post – Thursday 12 September 1901

MINING OFFENCES AT ULVERSTON

This morning a case arising out of the recent fatal explosion at Plumpton Limestone Quarry was held at Ulverston. The North Lonsdale Iron and Steel Company, the owners, and Mr Edmund Tosh, the Company's agent, being each charged under two informations with having unlawfully contravened the special rules providing that an iron or steel rod shall not be used for stemming or charging the hold charged with explosives, and the gunpowder shall not be conveyed from the magazine to the quarry other than in secure packages.

Mr. Falcon, Workington, instructed by Mr. Hedley, H. M. Chief Inspector, prosecuted; Mr. S. H. Jackson, Ulverston, appeared for the defendants and pleaded guilty stating that the defects

complained of had now been remedied. He pointed out, however, that it was not alleged that these defects had caused the explosion. Fines amounting to £20 and costs were imposed.

Another report added the following: Mr Falcon said he did not think the iron rods had caused the explosion. The Court expressed surprise that the iron rods had been in use so long without coming under the eyes of the inspector, seeing how actively he carried on his work of inspection of the district. They had found it extremely difficult to distinguish as to the responsibility between the company and their agent, and therefore they had decided to treat both as equally liable. Mr Gordon Falcon explained that the reason that the inspector had not noticed the iron rods was that the men happened on each occasion to be charging the smaller hole with the copper rods.

Lancashire Evening Post – Friday 3 July 1925

QUARRYMAN'S ACCIDENT

MAN'S DEATH DUE TO FALL OVER TWO YEARS AGO

At Ulverston, yesterday afternoon, the Coroner of Furness held an adjourned inquiry into the death of John Lewis Holmes, 63, Quarryman, 3, Oubas Hill, Ulverston, which occurred at his home on June 7th.

The deceased had been in the employ of the Plumpton Lime-Kiln and Quarries until he met with an accident two and a half years ago.

James Johnson, quarryman, residing at the Council Houses, Swarthmoor, said that at 10 am on January 4th 1923, he was following his employment at Plumpton Quarry, and the deceased was also working there on a bench on the quarry face. Witness next saw the deceased lying on his back on the loose stone at the bottom of the quarry. He was injured, bleeding from the face, and both legs were injured. Witness attended to him and conveyed him home in a trap.

From where the deceased fell to the bottom of the quarry would be about 12 feet. The scratches on the face were caused through falling on the broken rock.

Doctor Bowman, Ulverston, said he attended the deceased from the date of the accident to the time of his death. He suffered from injuries to the head, back and left leg. He had known the deceased for three to four years prior to the accident, and he was a healthy man. He attributed his death to the effects of the accident, the head injuries being the main cause. His mentality had been changed owing to the accident.

The coroner found that the deceased died, in accordance with the medical evidence from brain trouble caused by falling in the quarry.

Sources and additional information:

Website Archives:

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- Government's Legislation website <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukla/Vict/14-15/102/contents/enacted>
- Find My Past – census records
- Find My Past – Newspaper archives
- Historic England Archive
- Gatehouse Gazetteer
- Network Rail <https://www.networkrailmediacentre.co.uk/news/viaduct-project-wins-engineering-award#>

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- Railway & Canal Historical Society
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- The Furness Railway K J Norman
- The Furness Railway: a history, Michael Andrews
- The Furness Railway in and around Barrow, Michael Andrews
- A Regional History of the Railways of Great Britain vol 14, David Joy
- An Introduction to Cumbrian Railways, David Joy
- Railway & Canal Historical Society
- Facebook group: Ulverston our Great Lile Town
- Anecdotes from local residents
- Private papers and photo collection family of Dr J Hubert Jackson
- P J Gooderson undertook a study of mid-nineteenth century North Lancashire based on the Diary of James Stelfox (1855-1870) drawing on additional supporting sources of information. A copy of this informative study can be found via the attached link <https://www.hslc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/122-8-Gooderson.pdf>
- Some newspaper article transcripts from Helen J Brown
- Dr Michael Andrews
- Jim Blackburn
- Ray Porter
- Stephen Cairns
- Russell Hayley
- Brian Athersmith
- Ken Norman
- Dennis Metcalfe
- Horace William Banger
- Dave Garnett

- Beverley Sanders
- Barrie Hutchinson
- Bill Haddow

Newspapers:

Barrow Herald and Furness Advertiser
 Beckenham Journal
 Bolton Evening News
 Carlisle Express and Examiner
 Cheshire Daily Echo
 Halifax Daily Guardian
 Illustrated London News
 Kendal Mercury
 Lancashire Evening Post
 Liverpool Evening Express
 Manchester Evening News
 Millom Gazette
 Morning Leader
 Nottingham Evening Post
 Penrith Observer
 Preston Herald
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 Soulby's Ulverston Advertiser
 St James Gazette
 Staffordshire Sentinel
 The Barrow Herald and Furness Advertiser
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 Whitehaven News
 The Lancashire Daily Post
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 The Sheffield Daily Telegraph