

Penwortham Heritage Trail

**TRAMS
and TRAINS
Circular
Walk**

Discover Penwortham's Hidden Histories!



*The Last Train for Southport
leaving Penwortham Cop Lane Station
September 5th 1964*



**South
Ribble**
Borough Council

Finding Your Way Round

For those joining the walk by bus. Take the Penwortham number 3 service to the Cromwell Road stop and join the walk at point 1



* If cycling with children please be aware that traffic on Cop Lane and Leyland Road can be busy, but the rest of the route is on quieter roads.

The walk is 4.3 miles long and is on public highways, or cycle/footpaths. There are some steps. The walk begins and ends at Booths Supermarket on Millbrook Way. There are cafes en-route.

Turn left out of Booths and follow Millbrook Way to Cop Lane then turn left to point 1.

Trams and Trains

Until 1759, when the first bridge over the River Ribble was built, the only way to travel to Penwortham was by ferry. Then, with the building of the bridge (Old Penwortham Bridge) carts, carriages and pedestrians were able to cross from Preston over the River. This bridge was followed in 1882 by the construction of the nearby West Lancashire Railway bridge. This company built a line from Southport to Preston but there was no station in Penwortham until 1911 when Penwortham got its very own station - just a Halt known as 'Cop Lane Halt'. In 1940 the name was changed to 'Penwortham Cop Lane'.

Penwortham had its own tram, although it never quite made it into Penwortham! It terminated at the end of Broadgate by the Old Penwortham Bridge and was called the Penwortham tram! Initially in 1879 it was horse drawn operating on a 3ft, 6ins gauge tramway. In 1903 it was closed and the lines widened to standard gauge i.e. 4ft, 8½ins. It re-opened in 1904 powered by overhead electricity cables and finally closed in July 1932 when an omnibus took over the route.

With the arrival of the tram on the opposite side of the bridge the people of Penwortham now had access to public transport so they could travel to work in the mills, factories, markets and offices in Preston.

Come with us on a walk back in time as we discover the rise and fall of Penwortham's early transport routes.

1 Penwortham Cop Lane Station

Look down on the Penwortham by-pass which was constructed on the track bed of the old Southport to Preston railway line which was built by the *West Lancashire Railway Company* in 1882.



The line terminated at a station in Preston at the bottom of Fishergate Hill.

In 1897, financial problems led to the *West Lancashire Railway* being taken over by the *Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway*. Then, due to the expanding population of Penwortham this company decided to open *Cop Lane Halt* in 1911, later to become *Penwortham Cop Lane*. The station had two small Booking Office/Waiting Rooms and was lit by paraffin lights, 11 lamp posts, 2 bracket lamps and internal lamps as required. It never had mains gas or electricity!

The line struggled on until *British Railways* took it over in 1948. Finally, the Beeching report recommended closure and on September 5th 1964 the line was finally closed after its 82 year existence.



The Penwortham Tram on Broadgate

Cross Cop Lane by the lights and then turn left crossing the two slip roads and take the footpath to the right alongside the Junior School. Follow this path until it joins the 'T' junction with the path from Hill Road.

2 Penwortham Junction



From the bridge, looking towards Preston you would have seen the Penwortham Junction signal box on your right. This was the result of the decision in 1883 to join the Southport/Preston Line to the East Lancashire line to enable through trains to travel from Southport to Blackburn. This section is still in use, all be it for freight until 1965. This is the southern junction of what is known as the *Penwortham Triangle*. The signal box was burnt down in August 1959 and replaced by a open lever frame.

After crossing the bridge take the steps to the left or if cycling follow the slope down to the path below the bridge. Continue along this path until you reach an opening on the right.

3 Penwortham Triangle

Looking between the bridge abutments on the path that leads to the Penwortham Residential Park you will see the remains of the other access bridge into the triangle. This was originally an old track that went between Stricklands Lane and St Mary's well*, situated on the east side of Penwortham Hill. *(It's still there). Just look at the size and workmanship of this simple access bridge!



Continue along the path towards Preston until you reach Leyland Road.



4 Leyland Road Bridge



This bridge took the West Lancashire Railway over Leyland Road. All that's left of the entrance to the Middleforth bridge are the abutments. Originally there would have been a further girder stanchion on the footpath to help support the iron bridge. The Ribble Junction signal box was situated up to your right on the embankment and was used until 1900 when Preston (Fishergate Hill) Station was closed to passengers. Trains would travel via the *Penwortham Triangle* and the *Whitehouse Junction* in order to get into Preston station.

Cross over Leyland Road and turn left and then right onto the bridge crossing over the river to the far side.

5 The Penwortham Tram

As you look up Broadgate you will see the bus shelter on your left. This was where the Tram stopped - it's the closest it got to Penwortham. It was known as the *Penwortham Tram* and started as a horse drawn tram in 1879. By 1904 it was an electric tram and it carried on until July 1932 when it was replaced by an omnibus!

The tram service ran to Strand Road, Withy Trees and other destinations and gave the People of Penwortham their first public transport.

As you retrace your steps look over the wall on the right and you will see an arch set into the bank on the Preston side, this is the site of the 'Gentleman's Convenience' possibly mainly for use of the tram drivers. It was accessed from above via a set of steep steps and was still in use in the 1960's. (sorry, there was no Ladies!)



Retrace your steps over the bridge and turn left into Riverside Road.

6 The West Lancashire Railway Bridge

This bridge carried the line to its terminus - the Fishergate Hill Station which was situated at the bottom of the hill. Some of you might remember it as Silcock's the provender merchant? The station was demolished in 1976.

The bridge consisted of 6 Longridge stone pillars, four in the river and one on each bank. The bridge completed the 16 mile line from Southport to Preston which had taken nine and a half years to build. The bridge was tested by running a heavy locomotive with carriages over it. Later, a heavier load consisting of four engines stood on the bridge and ran backwards





and forwards several times. The deflection of a quarter of an inch was considered satisfactory.

In 1925 additional stone and iron supports were introduced to carry a riveted gas main into Preston from the newly built Lostock Hall Gas Works. The *Preston Gas Company* were responsible for this. An additional high pressure main was added during gas conversion in the 1970's. Since the line closed in 1965, carrying pipes is the sole use of the bridge!

Continue along Riverside Road and the riverside path until you reach . . .

7 The North Union Bridge

This was the first railway bridge into Preston and was designed by W B Vignoles. The year was



1838 and it was only 8 years after the World's very first passenger railway was built from Manchester to Liverpool!

Originally just 28ft wide, it was doubled in 1879 and in 1904 the cast iron section was added making the bridge as we see it today. It carries the *Main West Coast Line* from London to Glasgow.

Continue along the path, pass under the next bridge and then turn immediately right to the top of the slope and turn right again onto the bridge.

8 East Lancashire Bridge



Built in 1850 this bridge originally had a series of 52 arches forming a viaduct stretching towards the *Whitehouse Junction*. Three 100ft iron arches spanned the river and at the insistence of Preston Corporation it incorporated a public footway (which still survives today!)

By 1883 settling had occurred in the viaduct and this necessitated the new owners, the *Lancashire & Yorkshire Railway* to fill in virtually all the arches. Further work was carried out on the bridge in 1930, when the original iron arches were replaced with the present steel panels.



From the centre of the bridge you get a wonderful view of the **Park Hotel**. This was a railway hotel built in 1882 as a joint venture between The London & North Western Railway and The Lancashire & Yorkshire Railway. It was opened just in time for the 1882 Preston Guild. The interior included wall and floor tiles by Minton. It had over 60 bedrooms but only 8 bathrooms!

The Park Hotel



If you wish to stop for refreshments you can continue over the bridge and take the steps on the right down into Avenham Park to the Pavilion Cafe. Otherwise, continue on the path going away from Preston.

As we bear right to pass under the main West Coast Line, turn to look south, the **Whitehouse West signal box** would have been situated on the right. This box was built in 1900 when the L & Y Railway built the north curve to enable the Southport trains to terminate at the main Preston Station (Butler Street). This decision brought about the demise of the Fishergate Hill Station as a passenger terminus.

Take the right hand fork and pass under the main West Coast Railway Line. At the end of this path turn right into Leyland Road.

10 Fire Station Bridge



This is where the line crossed Leyland Road to the **Middleforth Junction**. The bridge was known throughout its existence as **The Cephos Bridge** or even **The Jaguar House Bridge** which were the adverts on either side of the bridge!

Continue along Leyland Road until the pedestrian crossing. Cross here and continue a short way along until you turn left into Stricklands Lane.

9 Whitehouse West Junction



11 Middleforth Junction Bridge

Passing along Stricklands Lane you would have passed under two bridges forming the *Middleforth Junction*. Above would have been a plate layers cabin and a signal gantry, further down and before the Fire Station Bridge would have been the Middleforth Junction Signal Box.

From 1903 the east side of the junction was taken out of use and during WWII army huts from Whitehouse triangle were relocated here to become the 2nd Penwortham Scout Headquarters (also known as Bank Top).



Under the guidance of Charles Brian Sladen, affectionately known as 'Gaffer' the scouts were to remain here for the next 40 years!

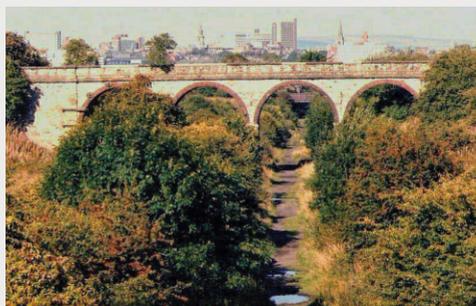
Passing along Stricklands Lane, notice Mayfield Close which was built on the site of the since removed railway embankment.

Continue along Stricklands Lane and turn right into Hill Road South. Continue some 450 metres along Hill Road South until you reach Corncroft on the right. Turn into Corncroft following the path between two bungalows to the foot bridge.

12 Farmer's Access Bridge



Now simply a foot bridge it started life as a rather splendid 4 arched access bridge for the local farmer. There was an initial intention to use the area adjacent to this bridge, where the spoil had been taken and used to form the embankments further towards the river, as sidings. This never happened!



After crossing the foot bridge turn left along the path to Cop Lane, turn left and cross the two slip roads by the lights and cross Cop Lane. Turn right into Millbrook Way and back to Booths supermarket where the walk began and where there is a cafe and toilets.

**My Neighbourhood
Penwortham**

