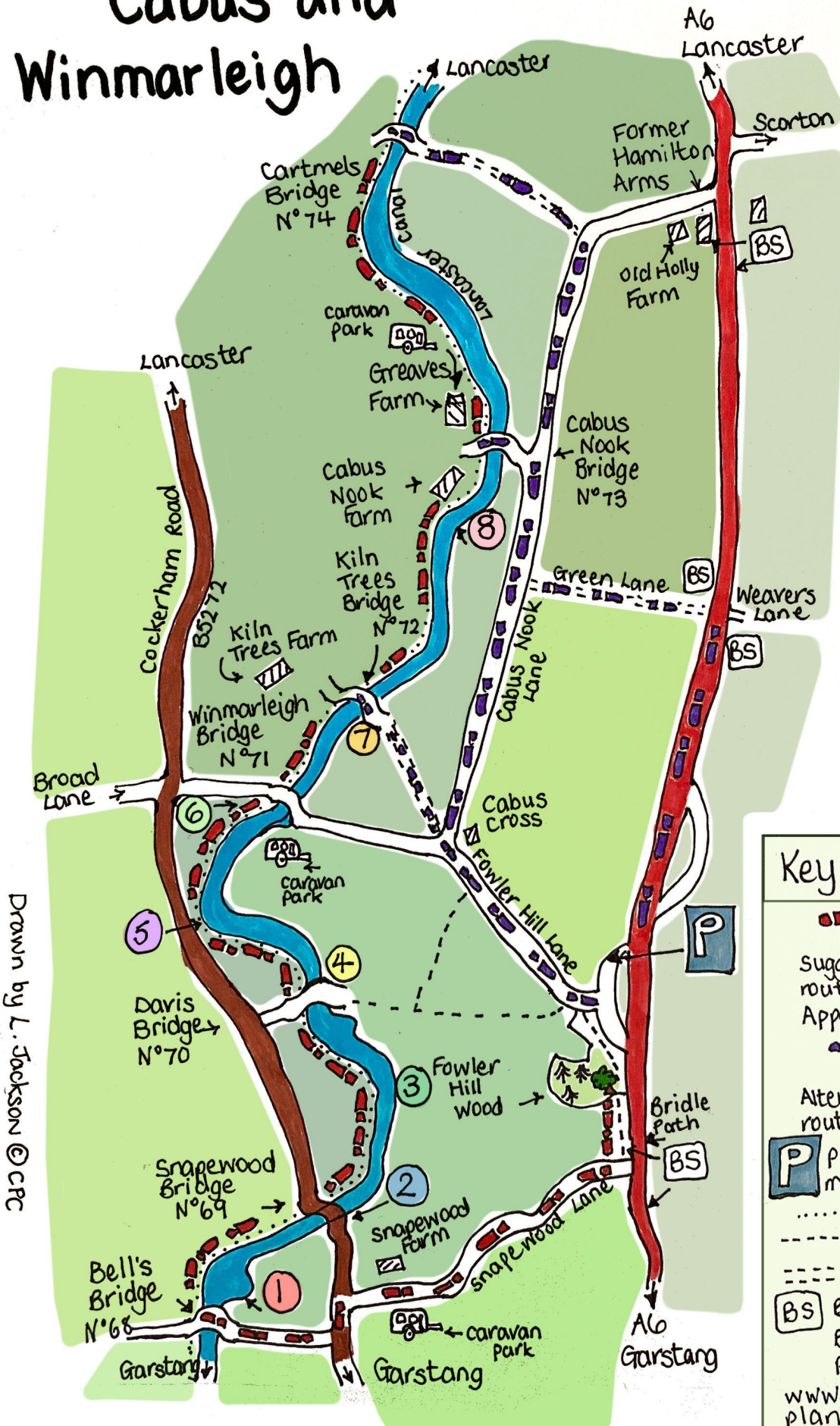


# A Canal Walk in Cabus and Winmarleigh



Not to scale



Drawn by L. Jackson © CFC

**Key**

-  Suggested route (8,200 steps)  
Approx 2 hours 6.5+ km
-  Alternative route
-  Please use marked carpark
-  tow path
-  footpaths
-  tracks
-  Bus stop N° 40/41, 42  
Buses to Lancaster,  
Preston + Blackpool

[www.stagecoachbus.com/plan-a-journey](http://www.stagecoachbus.com/plan-a-journey)

# A Canal Walk in Cabus and Winmarleigh

Cabus is a small rural parish lying eight miles south of Lancaster and a mile north of Garstang. The Lancaster Canal runs through the parish. Use this leaflet to take a walk along the canal towpath and explore aspects of its history and interesting features.

## The Lancaster Canal

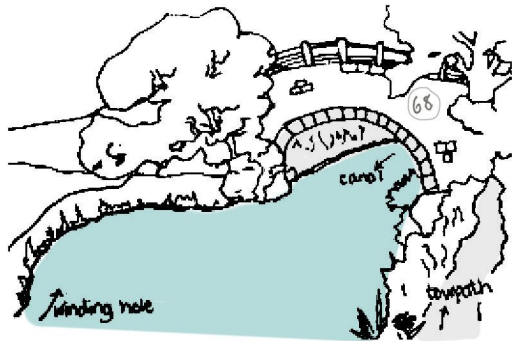
The Lancaster Canal has already had its 200th anniversary (1819-2019). The idea for a canal was first thought of in the 1770s. The port of Lancaster (on the River Lune) was silting up and a group of wealthy merchants suggested building a canal. Designed and built by the engineer John Rennie, construction commenced in 1793 with the Preston to Tewitfield section completed in 1797, at 41 miles the longest lock free stretch of canal in the country. It finally reached Kendal in 1819. The canal avoids hills by following the contours of the land and is one of the country's few coastal canals. There is a branch to Glasson Dock and the sea; this has 6 locks.

The canal transported mainly limestone from south Cumbria to local kilns (see no 6 and no 7). Coal came from the Wigan area, it was used for fuelling industry, e.g., Garstang gas works and heating homes. Its nickname became 'The Black and White Canal'. The canal was very prosperous until the building of the railways from 1840. <https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/enjoy-the-waterways/canal-and-river-network/lancaster-canal>

## 1. Winding Hole at Bells Bridge No 68

Stand on Bells Bridge and look north. On the right-hand side of the canal is a feature called a winding hole (or swinging area). The canal is wider to enable working boats to turn and change direction. Winding holes were purposely built usually near factories or wharves, this one

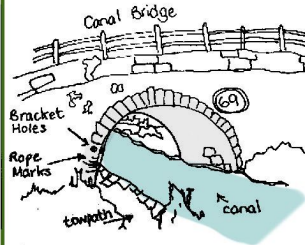
may be the result of clay being dug out to line the canal. On a clear day it is possible to see the Lakeland mountains.



Written and Illustrated by Louise Jackson, edited by Dr Louise Banton, graphics by Alison Romaine. With contributions from local historian Anthony Coppin, David Slater (Lancaster Canal Trust) and William Froggatt (Heritage Advisor Canal and River Trust).

## 2. Canal bridges

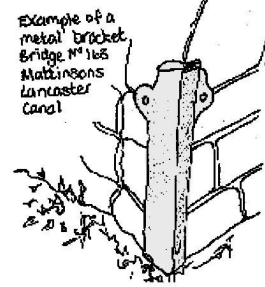
Look out for the rope marks on the side of the bridges. Before the canal boats were mechanised horses pulled them along the canal. The marks were made by the ropes rubbing into the sides of the bridge as the horses pulled the boat along. To try and prevent this, metal brackets were fitted in the 2 holes on the side of the bridge. The towing ropes ran through the brackets to help protect the bridge from



damage.

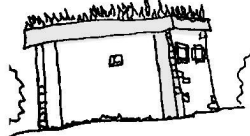
The bridges were all numbered in the 1960s.

This section of the canal became part of the official defensive WW2 Stop Line to contain any invasion along the Lancashire coast. The parapets of the bridges between Garstang and Glasson were removed in 1940 and replaced by railings as part of that defensive.



## 3. WW2 Home Guard gun emplacement

Just before Davis Bridge look for the Home Guard gun emplacement on the other side of the canal. Here, volunteers kept watch for possible enemy attacks via the canal. A gun was placed at the open side of the building, with sandbags to protect the crew. The grass roof provided camouflage.

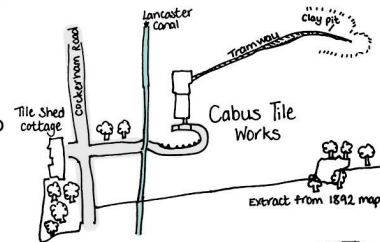


<https://tinyurl.com/archaeologydata>

## 4. Cabus Tile Works by Davies Bridge No 70

Looking east, the 1892 map (Lancashire Archives, Preston) shows there was a tile making business owned by the Towers family. It was a sizeable concern, with buildings and a tramway across the field to a clay pit. Imagine the tiles being shipped onto the canal boats, coal being unloaded and boats turning in the winding hole, quite different to the quiet stretch of canal we see today.

<https://tinyurl.com/y2u6qyu5>



## 5. Canal milestones

To mark the bicentenary of the canal's completion, the Canal & River Trust restored the missing 24 milestones along the towpath. Canal milestones tell you how far you have travelled, whereas road signs tell you how far to the destination. The boat people had to pay the Lancaster Canal Company a toll for the distance they had carried their cargo. The company installed the milestones to prevent false claims being made.

<https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/about-us/where-we-work/north-west/lancaster-canal-bicentenary-2019>



## 6. The Smithy Wharf by Winmarleigh Bridge No 71

There was a smithy and wharf by the bridge and a lime kiln. Lime was used as a fertiliser in agriculture and mortar for building. The winding hole remains as do the buildings and evidence of the wharf.

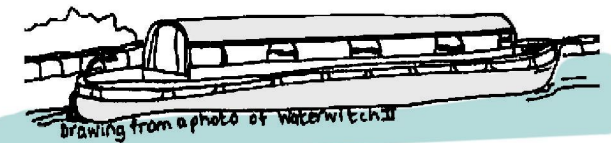
## 7. Anti-tank cubes (over Kiln Tree Bridge No 72)

In WW2, thousands of these concrete cubes or 'Dragon's Teeth' were placed along the canals to stop German tanks from breaking through defensive lines. <https://tinyurl.com/yuz2s6f>



## 8. Packet Boats at Cabus Nook Bridge No 73

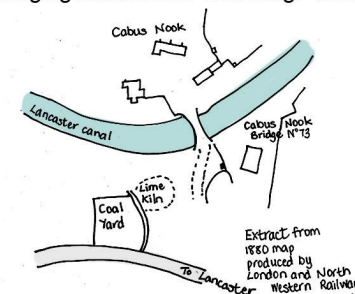
The absence of locks enabled a fast packet service to move quickly along the canal carrying passengers and light goods. In 1813 the journey by road from Preston to Kendal (57 miles) would have taken 14 hours. In 1833 the packet boat 'Water Witch' (the first of 4 to be commissioned) was introduced in direct competition to the roads and cut the journey to just 10 hours. It was 76ft long and carried 120 passengers. Refreshments were served onboard. The 30 mile distance from Preston to Lancaster could be done in 3 hours. <http://www.yobunny.org.uk/canalcatholic/packets.htm>



The packet boat was a safer and quicker way to travel and could be hailed anywhere along the canal. Lawyers attending Lancaster assizes preferred to use it to avoid highway robbers.

The packet boats were hauled by 2 horses going at full gallop. The rider would blow a horn to alert other boats as the packet boats had priority and any other boats had their tow rope cut if they were in the way. Sometimes riders didn't duck quickly enough going under a bridge and ended up in the canal!

Every 4 miles the horses were changed. Cabus Nook was the changing station after Garstang. There was a wharf and smithy,



where the horses could be shod if need be. Imagine the hustle and bustle when the packet boat arrived. In 1846 the Lancaster to Carlisle railway line to Kendal opened. This saw the end of the packet boat service.

The 1880 canal map produced by London and North Western Railway (Lancaster Canal Trust) shows a coal yard and lime kiln at Cabus Nook.