

Miles Without Stiles



Cumbria
County Council

Route Information

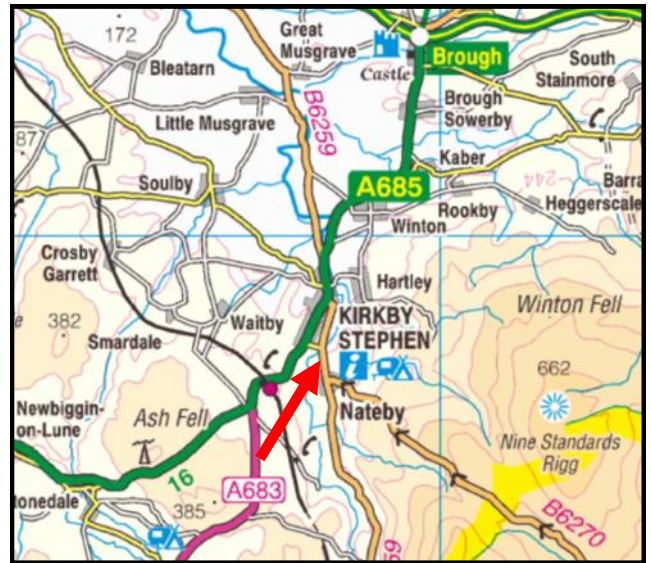
Distance 3.5 km/2.2 miles (return)

Time needed 2 hours (approx)

Terrain Mainly flat, crushed stone surface, with short steep slopes at each end

Start point. A small car park on the B6259, between Kirkby Stephen and Nateby. Space for approx 8 cars. **Grid Ref:** NY 772 074

Public Transport: Bus services 563 and 564 stop at the nearby Croglin Castle Hotel on the A685. These are not low floor vehicles and services are limited.



© Crown Copyright 2010. All rights reserved. Licence no 100019596

This tranquil linear route follows a permissive path running between Stenkrith Bridge and the village of Hartley along a disused railway line, which is owned and managed by the Northern Viaduct Trust. The predominantly flat surface makes for easy passage and provides ever-changing views down the Eden Valley to the North Pennines and their highest point at Cross Fell. The disused railway provides added interest along the route and a fascinating insight into the area's industrial past.

Leave the car park through a wide gate with an easy latch handle, pausing to read the plaque on the memorial stone on the way, and follow the path which descends at 5° (1:11 gradient) for 80 metres to reach the former trackbed: There is a rest point half way down the slope.



Hairpin bend on the initial section, as viewed from the rest point

Once you reach the disused track bed you will find the path to be 120cm wide, clearly defined and with wooden edgings.

A less steep access route can be found at the junction of Nateby Road and Station Road (NY 772 075). This would be the best route to use for those arriving at Stenkrith Bridge by bus. Pass through the wide field gate and follow the compacted stone path, which gradually descends through woodland (2°, 1:30 gradient) to cross the infant River Eden via an arched steel bridge (width 150cm). The bridge offers dramatic views of the deep limestone gorge and waterfalls below. After leaving the bridge, an incline of 4° (1:25 gradient) for approximately 7metres brings you to the main path

After approximately 200metres you will reach a stone bench and the first of several stones with poetic and literary engravings.

The route forms part of the Kirkby Stephen Poetry Path - themed 'A year in the life of a hill farmer', celebrating the landscape of the Eden Valley. Poet Meg Peacocke wrote a series of twelve poems, which give sense of place and reflect the farming calendar - hay-making, harvest, hedgelaying and lambing time.

The poems have been carved into a series of stones and incorporated into walls and stiles, or placed like milestones along the route. Through the stones walkers can trace the course of a farmer's year simply by following the route, which runs from Stenkrith near Kirkby Stephen to Hartley and back.

There are numerous passing points placed at regular intervals along the path and several wooden benches, which offer a chance to take a break and enjoy the fine views.

After passing under the first overbridge, and through its associated gates, the surface has suffered water erosion, and is slightly uneven in places for approximately the next 100 metres.

Soon you will reach a small brick building (a former platelayers' hut) which contains several information panels detailing the history of the railway. It also makes a welcome shelter in poor weather! The entrance to the shelter is 90cm wide with a low wooden step.



Typical view along the route

Shortly after passing under another bridge, you will reach Podgill Viaduct where the surface changes to loose gravel. The viaduct has 1.2 metre (4 feet) high parapets, over which there are views into Pod Gill valley, containing Ladthwaite Beck, 26 metres (84 feet) below.

Built in 1860 by contractors Chambers and Hilton at a cost of £6,189, Podgill Viaduct is constructed of local limestone and has eleven arches, each of 30 feet span, giving it a total length of 466 feet, and a maximum height of 84 feet.

Originally built for a single track it was only 12 feet wide between parapets. However to enable a double track to be laid, the viaduct was widened with work commencing

in 1889. The task was undertaken by building a new, almost identical, viaduct alongside the existing one, to which the new structure was tied. The work was completed approximately 3 years later.



Arches of Podgill viaduct

Just over the bridge, a flight of steep steps leaves the main track and leading down to a picnic area (not wheelchair accessible) that offers a chance to view the viaduct from underneath.

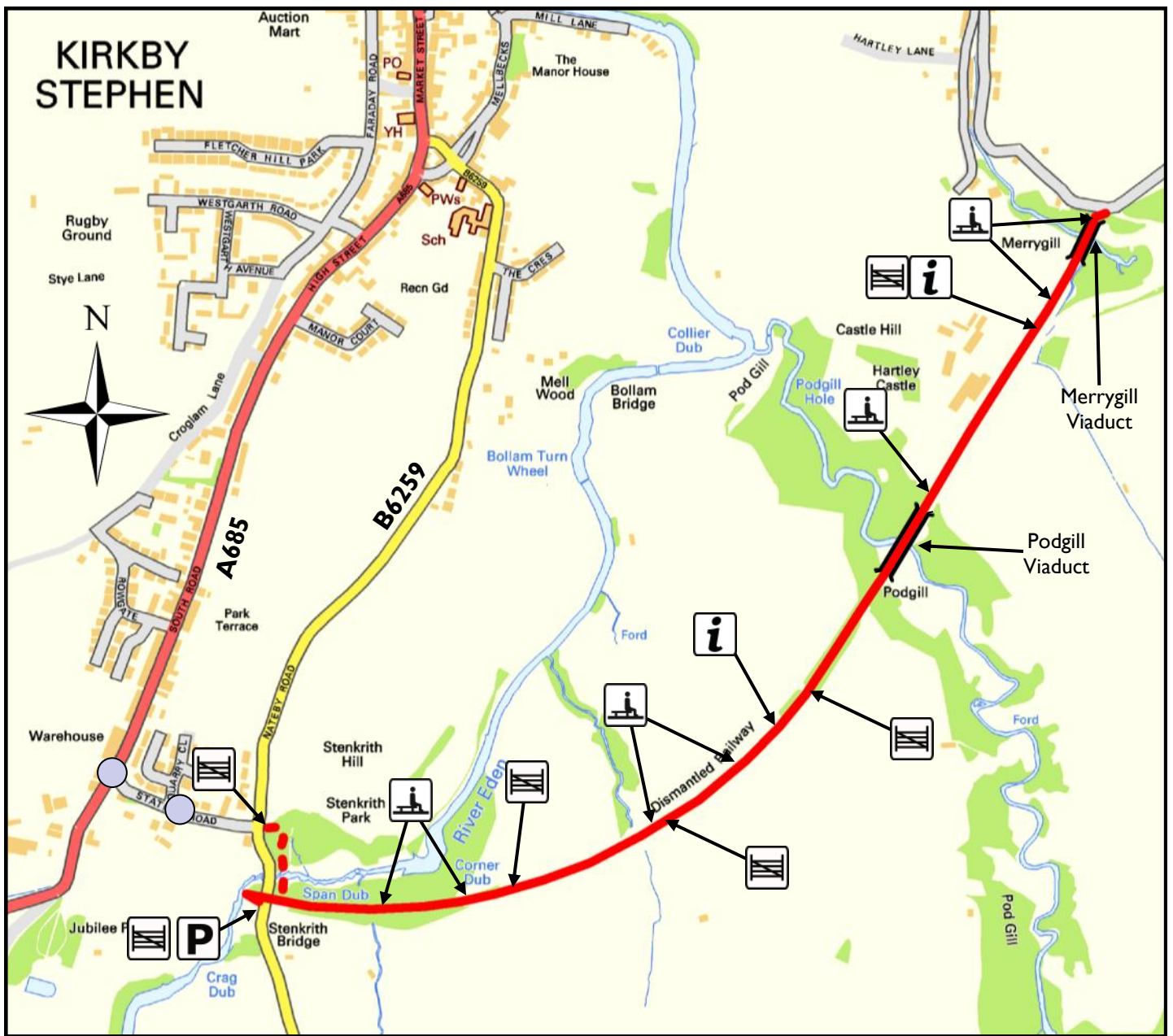
The surface reverts back to compacted fine stone and continues on to pass through another gate and reach the site of the old Merrygill signal box. Further information panels detail the history of the signal box and the junction it controlled.

After the signal box here it is only another 100 metres before you reach the second viaduct on this route, Merrygill, spanning the narrow valley of Hartley Beck. You can also see Hartley Quarry on the right.








Merrygill Viaduct has nine arches each of 30 feet span, giving a total length 366 feet and is 78 feet above the valley bottom. It was also constructed out of local limestone by Chambers & Hilton for a price of £3,721.

Like Podgill, it was originally built to carry a single track, and was widened to carry double track as part of the same contract as Podgill Viaduct, completed about 1892.

The trail ends just over the viaduct, and our route returns the same way we came, back to Stenkrith Bridge. However by crossing the viaduct and going down the steep 30 metre long 14° (1:5 gradient) ramp you will pass through a gate to arrive at the steep road (6° 1:9 gradient) above Hartley Village. There is limited parking here, but it makes a good setting down/picking-up point.



Route Map Key

-  Car parking
-  Site interpretation point
-  Gate
-  Rest points
-  Alternative Route
-  Recommended Route
-  Bus stop

Useful Number and Points of Information

- Upper Eden Visitor Centre
Tel: 017683 71199
Email: visit@uecp.org.uk
- Traveline - 0875 2002233
- The route and surrounding area is on Ordnance Explorer Map 19
- Northern Viaduct Trust - www.nvt.org.uk
- ECCP Poetry path leaflet - www.eccp.org.uk
- Kirkby Stephen 'Walkers are Welcome' - www.walkeden.org
- Croplin Castle Hotel - 01768 371389
- There is also wide choice of refreshments available in nearby Krikby Stephen.