

Lune Bridges

We start from the Bull Beck car park on the A683, on the main road between Caton and Hornby – it is clearly signposted, but if you are not familiar with the area, and are using satnav to get there then try postcode LA2 9QR, or LA2 9JN, but ignore any directions to leave the A683 other than to park at Bull Beck. If you are using a paper map, then the grid reference is SD54216499, and for fans of what-3-words, the tag is **fidgeting.truly.feasting**. Parking at Bull Beck is free, and there are public toilets. The site is popular at weekends, so our advice is to schedule the walk for midweek or arrive early.

From the car park, we head back to the A683 and cross carefully to pick up the Millennium Park path on the opposite side of the road, initially heading left as if walking to Lancaster. At this early stage in the walk, we stay on the Millennium Park path for no more than 200m, looking for a lane that crosses the path, where we take a right turn heading back on ourselves and across the front of a farm. After about 100m, the farm track takes a sharp left turn, and we continue to follow it heading out toward the river through flat fields that are subject to flooding when the river is in spate.

Just beyond the sheep pens, we have the river on our right, and essentially just walk along the riverbank for a good while, enjoying views of the river and the wildlife along the banks, toward the Waterworks bridge, the first of the bridges on today's walk.

The Waterworks bridge is an impressive and rather beautiful structure, which despite looking a like a typical example of Victorian civic pride actually dates from 1906, when it was built to carry four water mains, part of the supply from Thirlmere in the Lake district to Manchester and other Northwest towns. Importantly for walkers, the bridge has a pedestrian path making this one of the better places to cross the river. The bridge is not shown as a public right of way on the OS map but given that OS show a number of paths apparently crossing the river where there are no bridges, this is not too surprising.

We press on downstream, staying by the side of the river, and soon see a wooden footbridge ahead of us. This crosses a small tributary of the Lune – Artle Beck, the river that runs through Caton. We continue downstream, passing a weir where Herons and Egrets will often be seen, and where Salmon can be seen leaping later in the year, before seeing two more major bridges coming into view. The first is the railway bridge that carried the railway toward Lancaster – as we saw earlier it's now part of the Millennium Park path, and just downstream of that is the road bridge into Halton.

We walk under the railway bridge and then follow it up the far side to pick up the Millennium Park path across the river. On the right as we head back toward the old railbed we see an attractive picnic area which makes a good place to take a break.

We cross the bridge, and on the far side we find a visitor car park and toilets. Our route now follows the road toward Halton – there is a pleasant walkway segregated from the traffic which is accessed by walking past the corner of the amenity block at the car park. We follow this for about 250m and then look for a small gate on the opposite side of the road – this takes us into woodland on the North side of the Lune – and we follow this path all the way to Halton Mills – via a wooden footbridge, for those intent on counting the bridges.

On the way down this path, we see a weir in the river – this maintains a level such that Mills at Halton Mill could once be powered. The Mills are now gone, but some of the infrastructure has been repurposed by Halton Lune Hydro (HLH) to create a community hydroelectric scheme capable of powering more than 300 homes with emissions free electricity.

Our path ends at a quiet access road to a modern housing development – and we continue along the road for a while. It bears right and we then take a lane on the left with a pasture on our right, and housing on our left. At the end of this lane we head left and find another bridge over the Lune. This was once a toll bridge serving Halton Station. It is now a free to use pedestrian bridge.

We cross here and at the far end turn left – back onto the Millennium way at the site of what was once Halton railway station.

From here, our return journey follows the Millennium Park path all the way back to Bull Beck, crossing the Lune twice. The first of these two bridge is not one we have used before – because we were previously in the woodland to the north of the river. The second is the one next to the picnic area with the otter sculptures, so that should feel familiar, and again this is a good place to take a break before the final mile back to Bull Beck.