

CLAIMED PUBLIC FOOTPATH

from MARTHOLME LANE, GREAT HARWOOD, HYNDBURN BOROUGH
to PUBLIC FOOTPATH No. 11, READ PARISH, RIBBLE VALLEY
BOROUGH.

Length of claimed: -

900metres approximately.

Description of Claimed route: -

The claimed route is from point **A** which is to the north end of the very well used Lancashire County Council recreational, concessionary footpath/bridleway, which was established as part of the reclamation of the Martholme Railway and Colliery, and which links Martholme Lane and Mill Lane.

Access to this claimed route is either from the disused railway from the south, or from the west where there are a series of flights of steps. These are entered from Martholme Lane through a square opening in the wall with a stone paved surface, then over a worn path in the grass banking, past a Lancashire County Council notice board before going up the timber and stone steps with timber posts and double half round timber handrails.



At the top of the steps there is a stone surfaced path on the disused railway line and a timber seat placed to the east of this path and facing to the east and overlooking the valley of the River Calder.



Just to the north of the top of the steps is the end of the stone parapet walls of the viaduct and placed across the width of the viaduct and the parapet walls is a security fence, approximately 2 metres high. The end of the parapet wall up to the security fence has been coated with anti vandal paint although it would appear that people have been climbing over the fencing at this point. (several footprints clearly visible in the paint)

Point **A** is approximately 35 metres from the end of the viaduct where there are no discernable features visible, other than the embankment boundary with Martholme Lane below the viaduct structure.

There are paths visible through the grass, which is growing on the former railway. At the time of inspection a retired man was using the concessionary path, with his dog, and he made comments that whilst he was unable to use the route towards Burnley since the security fence was erected, he stated that there were still people who did use the claimed route despite the difficulty in gaining access to it.

Over the viaduct there is a "main" pathway visible roughly along the centre of the bridge as well as several meandering paths to the sides of this. The width available is approximately 8 metres between the parapet walls.



At the far end of the structure, at point **B**, there is a barricade of trees and bushes which have been placed across the end of the structure, these appear

to have been placed in an area of land which has been excavated to a depth of approximately 1 metre.



Although this barrier is intended to stop public use, it is possible to climb over the trees and it appears that there are three points where people have crossed this feature. (Two on the westerly side and one on the east) A photograph of the end of the parapet wall shows where the growth of brambles etc. leaves an access to one of these crossing points.



The end of the stone parapet wall on the westerly side shows signs of damage underneath the coping stones, this would appear to be caused by the machinery which excavated the trench or placed the trees. The rest of the structure would seem to be in a very good condition, with the walls in good order and only a small amount of shrub growth from the surface and no plants in the stonework.

Beyond the cut trees the former track bed is clear and open with trees grown up from both sides of a track and stretching off into the distance. This is approximately 5 metres wide. On the easterly side there is a notice fixed to a metal post stating: -

PRIVATE PROPERTY
THIS LAND
IS
PRIVATE PROPERTY.
ALL PERSONS ARE
WARNED
NOT TO TRESPASS ON IT

This is placed at the top of the embankment slope, and to the side of where the tracks would have been laid, and it appears that this area has been disturbed quite recently and that the trees etc from a length of approximately 10 metres have been removed and presumable are the source of those in the barrier. There also is a metal pipe which has been excavated and seems to have been turned to the south and ending over the sloping bank.

The claimed route continues to follow the disused railway line with trees to both sides and a clear, wide path. The surface is firm and even with little surface growth with a pair of faint tracks visible. There was one area where a muddy depression existed and it was possible to see footprints as well as animal tracks to the side of the puddle in the centre of the track.



There is no height restriction along this section and there is only one tree which has fallen across the route, but this still allows adequate room to pass beneath it.

After a distance of approximately 300 metres the wooded sides disappear and there is a wide, open grassed area with a track approximately 4 metres wide in the centre, with wide areas to both sides with bramble and nettle growth.



After approximately 80 metres the an area of land between the former track bed and the field boundary wall on the southerly side, has been excavated,

and a metal pipe had been exposed in the ground, this appears to be the same pipe that was exposed at the viaduct and turned out over the slope. Point B.

On this excavated area there has been tipped pieces of concrete etc. on the southern side of a very well used vehicular track.



There is a metal field gate in the stonewall on the south side, and approximately 70 metres further along on the northerly side there is another metal field gate into a cattle holding pen within the former railway line.

From this point there is a very well used track running towards a caravan park. After approximately 30 metres there are trees growing up both sides of the well used track and there



There is a flight of steps down the slope of the bank on the southern side with a handrail made from scaffolding, this leads to a gap in the stone wall where there is a green painted metal panel placed across the opening. This has a gateway included in it. There are spikes to the side of the panel and barbed wire to the top and to both sides. To the easterly side of this panel there is an old metal field gate placed across the level area to the side of the stone wall. This is a well-used private access from the caravan site, which is in the same ownership as this part of the former railway land.



The claimed route continues to follow the well used access track. After approximately 180 metres there is a large, locked, green metal gate with a similar length of fence running from this to the north to the boundary of the former railway land and the woodland. This also has barbed wire on top of this. To the south of the gate there are two metal mesh security fence panels. The southern most of these was leaning against one of the trees.



Fastened to the extended post on the southern side there is a notice with the same format and wording to that referred to above at point **B**.



The claimed route passes through the gateway and over a wide, open area used extensively by vehicles for parking, turning and for material storage. This extends to join public footpath number 11, Read Parish that is

over a macadam surfaced occupation road leading to the Caravan Park and farm beyond at point C.



At a point approximately 1 metre to the west of the above gate, there are two metal stanchions set in the ground, the one on the north side has a bracket fixed to it.



That on the south has a loop fastened to it, through which a metal tube is linked by a loop onto the post. It appears that this would have been a barrier, closing across the track onto the bracket on the other post. This appears to have been an access control, prior to the erection of the gate.



Whilst the metal gate and the attached fences does form a barrier to the claimed route it is possible to pass the end of the mesh panel where it ends short of the stone wall which is the caravan site boundary.



This involves passing around or through a multi trunk tree at the bottom of the slope down from the former track bed.



Beyond the tree and the mesh panel there is a visible area of trodden growth up the slope between the fence panels, and the former metal tube barrier, referred to above. This is approximately 1 metre wide and shows signs of use.



Whilst the use of the claimed route is obviously discouraged, there was evidence that this point had been used to gain access onto the claimed route, with a worn path clearly visible.

Environment Directorate comments:

The concessionary path to the south of this claimed path is very well used all the way up to the security fence. This use is either as a circular walk, down the steps and back along Martholme Lane, or as a cul-de-sac path and returning along the disused railway line.

Despite the security fence, there is evidence that people do gain access onto the railway viaduct. This was confirmed to the rights of way officer at the time of inspection by a local resident.

The surface of the viaduct is clear, although grassed over, and over this there are paths clearly visible over this.

At the far end of the viaduct there is a barrier of tree and shrubs placed, and whilst this appears to be difficult to cross, it is quite easy to cross, and far less dangerous to anyone who has already crossed the security fence.

There is then a warning notice in place, which can only be read by someone who has already crossed the viaduct.

The whole of the next 700metres approximately is over the disused railway line and is over a clear, grassed track approximately 4 metres approximately

wide. This has trees to both sides for the majority of it's length, all of which give a clear headroom sufficient to allow for considerable vehicular use which has taken place over approximately 300 metres.

Before reaching the access road that carries footpath no. 11, Read Parish, there is a large metal gate and barrier placed over the claimed route approximately 1 metre beyond a metal tube, open between stanchions, which would appear to have been an earlier obstruction that has been made more effective by the gate etc.

It is possible to gain access to footpath 11, by passing to the southern side of the barrier and back onto the former railway line.

This obstruction is easier to pass than either of the two previous ones, and again it is possible to see that this access has been well enough used to make a route visible on the surface.

Facing to the east there is a second warning notice.

In conclusion, despite the considerable barriers, there appears to be a significant use of the claimed route.