

SKIPPOOL TO STANAH HERITAGE TRAIL



HERITAGE
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- 8** There is an option to extend this walk to the mouth of the Wyre Estuary where ICI once stood and the Fleetwood Marsh Nature Reserve, if you carry on with the walk it would ultimately take you to the docks at Fleetwood.

This part of the riverbank was marked as 'Bergerode' on maps from the early 1600s. The word meaning 'safe place to lay down ships in a storm'

ICI Hillhouse expanded on the site of the United Alkali Company which began production in 1890. ICI Hillhouse was a chlorine-production facility and a division of Imperial Chemical Industries (ICI), it was active between 1941 and 1992. Its entrances were on Hillylaid Road (via the extant gate at the end of today's The Hawthorns) and on Butts Road in Burn Naze, with the former Burn Naze Railway Station serving those arriving by train.

A suggested route to make the walk circular is exiting the Wyre Estuary Country Park at Stanah along River Road (past the café) Follow the road round to the left and turn left onto Underbank Road and follow this until it joins Raikes Road. Turn left into Raikes Road, continue along and then use the local footpaths to turn to Wyre Road, or alternatively continue to the end of Raikes Road and turn left and follow the B5412 back to the start.

Important Warning – Please take care when following this trail and use a map. Check local tide times (for Fleetwood) as high tides that are 9 metres or above can cover both Wyre Road and stretches of the riverside path between Skippool and Stanah. Tide times are displayed in the locality or can be checked online.

- 6** You now approach a small picnic area called Cockle Hall Picnic Area (where a footpath also leaves the main path on the left).

Cockle Hall was located in today's Wyre Estuary Country Park it was the site of one of the earliest crossings of the River Wyre until the 1930s. It is also the former site of a cottage occupied by the Lawrenson family who were a large family of thirteen. The ferryman who took people to and brought people from Wardley's Creek also lived here at one time.

Prior to nearby Fleetwood's emergence as a port people emigrated to the Americas from the Wardley's Creek, including aboard the Quebec-bound Six Sisters on 3 April 1833. The harbour's foundation rocks are still visible beneath today's wooden jetty.

Until the 1930s, a ferry used to run from Cockle Hall, where you are standing now, to Wardleys Creek. Some of the passengers were employees of United Alkali Company at Burn Naze, the predecessor to ICI Hillhouse. Parts of the pier are still visible in the marsh in front of where Cockle Hall once stood.

Continue along the main riverside path, as you pass the largest reed bed you are entering Wyre Estuary Country Park.

- 7** Wyre Estuary Country Park is located in Stanah near Thornton.

Established in 1991 and covering 0.79 acres (0.32 ha), it is situated on the western banks of the 28-mile (45 km) long River Wyre, near its mouth at the Irish Sea at Fleetwood. The Wyre Estuary forms part of the southern boundary of Morecambe Bay.

Wyre Estuary Country Park holds a green flag and Visit England Award, as international marks of quality.

Fleetwood can be viewed to the north, and there are views across the river to South Lakeland to the northeast, Over Wyre to the east and, beyond, the Bowland Fells.

The park hosts all year round events which include ranger-led walks, conservation activities and family days.

Facilities include a large children's natural play area, woodlands paths and cycle trails and a den-making area, café and picnic spots, dog-free family area, space to let dogs off the lead, 5 Kilometre running route, wildlife, birdwatching opportunities, and free parking.

The Wyre Estuary contains the largest area of ungrazed saltmarsh in Lancashire. Saltmarshes have a unique flora, as the plants need to be salt tolerant due to the tidal waters. The estuary is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) because of its Saltmarshes and its full array of saltmarsh plants that it supports.

- 5** Keep following the riverside path as it turns sharply right, with the reed bed on your right by the saltmarsh.

The following section of path is a popular location for birdwatching. The mud and river channel are a feeding area for a variety of birdlife. The Wyre Estuary lies at the southern edge of Morecambe Bay, which is an internationally important location for its numbers of wildfowl and wading birds.

At various points along the path you will also see areas of common reed, these provide another unique habitat along the estuary. Summer migrant birds Reed bunting, Reed warbler and Sedge warbler use reed beds to nest and rear their young.



'Cockle Hall'

1

Start your walk from Thornton Lodge which is situated on Skippool Road and Wyre Road.

This is a private car park for the pub, if you wish to park here you should gain permission to do so from the landlord. Alternatively, there is a free Wyre Council carpark at Skippool Picnic Area (next to Thornton Cleveleys Cricket Club) which is around 10 minutes walk along the route you'll be taking (Wyre Road).

Walk down Wyre Road bearing left past Thornton Lodge.

A pub has stood on this site since around 1750, when the Ousel Inn was established. Ousel Inn had a infamous reputation in its day, it was a favoured haunt for smugglers who flourished during the reign of King George III. The White Horse Inn, which was situated close by, was a rum store for smugglers who stored the shipments that came in from Barbados and even had its own cock pit. Next to the site of Ousel Inn was Throstle Nest Cottage, which still stands today.

The name Skippool, is believed to be a joining of the Old Norse word skip, which means ship, and the Old English pull/pol, for a slow-moving stream.

Skippool is an area of Thornton, Lancashire on the banks of the River Wyre. These banks are known as Skippool Creek, an historic dock believed to have been in constant use since the Middle Ages and now home to a number of timeworn vessels.

In 1590 the port began to grow, brothers William and James Blackburne and William Jenkinson from Thistleton began landing their trade of goods of flax and tallow from Russia. Goods arrived at the docks from all over the world. Timber came from North America; and sugar and tobacco from the Americas. More locally, limestone and oats were transported from Ulverston and coal from Preston.

*'Skippool Creek in 1949'
Reproduced with the permission of the
Archive Service Manager, Lancashire Archives*

Skippool Creek and Wardley's Creek on the other side of the river were major trading port for hundreds of years. Together they were know as the Port of Poulton. In fact the ancient ports are known to have been used since Roman Times. In 2009 a Roman coin bearing Emperor Trajan's head and dated to 122CE was found at Skippool Creek.

As goods arrived at Skippool traders would ply their goods further inland at markets such as Poulton. Its popularity fell out of favour when Fleetwood's port opened in the 1840s.

Skippool was also a home for boatbuilders. Many ocean-going vessels were built here for local wealthy merchants based in Kirkham.

2

Continue along Wyre Road with the estuary on your right.

On your left is the privately owned house, Tarn Hows. Before it was converted into a house in the 1890s it was a warehouse built in 1744 for the purpose of trade with the West Indies.

Also on the left is the Illawalla Cottages, likely associated with the now demolished Illawalla Mansion, and probably accommodation for the staff and the gardeners.

Poolside Cottages, which are private residences are on your left, built in 1882. There is an interesting feature imbedded in the red brick wall by here that is visible from the road. It is what looks like a date stone from perhaps a now demolished house. The date stone states 'E.H 1902' likely to be Elizabeth Harrison of Illawalla, which was built in 1902.

You are passing the site of the now-demolished Edwardian mansion Illawalla, which in Aboriginal Australian means the house of plenty. Frederick J. Emery was one of the early owners. It is believed Emery, who bought the property in 1942, gave it this name to reflect his spell as a government official in Australia. The building's foundation stone was laid in 1902 by Vesta Tilley a well known performer of the era. The stone is visible outside the second cottage. Upon completion, it was the largest bungalow in Europe.

Later during World War II it became a home run by the Ministry of Health for pregnant evacuees. In the early 1950s, Emery leased the land overlooking the River Wyre to the local cricket club, who remain there today. David Taylor, grandson of Emery, grew up at Illawalla and believed that his mother, Margaret, was murdered by his father, RC Taylor, there have been many sightings of the ghost 'the white lady' in this area.

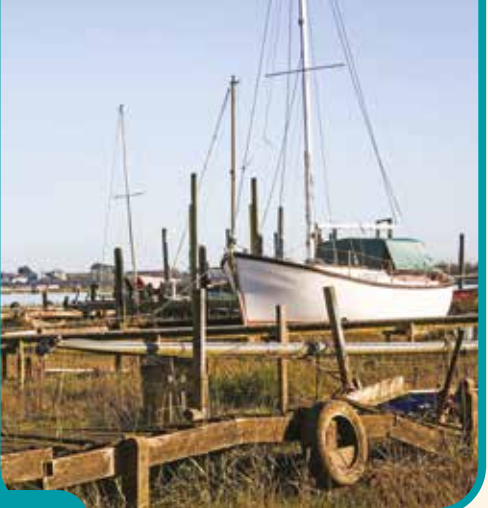
In addition to the Illawalla, there are other notable residences on Skippool Road out of view from the path you are currently on. There is Thornton Hall and Ashley Hall (or Ashley House), built in the 1920s, and where select celebrities would stay whilst appearing on Blackpool's North Pier. These include Danny La Rue and Roy Castle.



*'The Illawalla, Arthur Smith
(Life time, 1925)'*

Over the River Wyre from where you are standing now you can see the 'new' Shard Bridge. It was built in 1993, on its opening day residents of Hambleton got to walk over the bridge first before cars were allowed access.

Behind the bridge is the historic Shard Riverside Inn, with its white gables, which is a public house and hotel in Hambleton. In the early 19th century, the building was a ferryman's cottage known as Shard House.



The word Shard means widest part of a river and the building's address, Old Bridge Lane, references the historic bridge.

The bridge used to be immediately to the west of the building, but the bridge you see today is a few yards downstream, and its predecessor demolished. The slipway for the ferry still exists in front of the property.

In front of the property, by the sea wall is the gravestone of Jack the dog, who's owner was Norman Henshaw, then resident of the property and who drowned in the river in August 1908 aged 25 after rescuing his dog Jack. The dog survived and lived another six years. Henshaw is not mentioned on this gravestone and is buried in a churchyard in Hambleton.

In the distance you can see the Bowland Fells, Parlick Fells is directly behind the Shard Inn. To the left, standing alone is Beacon Fell. You can also see Wyre's highest fell, Fairsnape.

*In Victorian times,
Anna Sewell author
of Black Beauty, often
visited her relatives who
lived at the Shard House.*



3

Continue straight on along Wyre Road

The River House is situated on your left and was built in the late 1830s. It was once a restaurant frequented by the likes of Rudolf Nureyev, recognised as one of the greatest ballet dancers of all time, George Harrison musician and songwriter who achieved international fame as part of The Beatles, and various prominent politicians. The establishment was run by members of the Scott family. Today the building is a private house.

4

At the sign for the Yacht Club bear right on to the surfaced brideway that's closest to the estuary. (with the wooden post in situ and sign directing you).

Blackpool & Fleetwood Yacht Club is located just beyond the northern end of Wyre Road, which runs along the head of the docks. A bone mill, called Silcocks, once stood on the site of the Yacht Club. Silcocks Cottages, a home on Skippool Road about half a mile to the north, preserves this name. Some of the original brickwork is seen on the left as you cross the slipway. In this area another ghost has been frequently sighted, a man in Victorian working gear.

The footpath beyond the Yacht Club goes past boat berths and moorings off Skippool. On your right the River Wyre open up into the wider estuary which then ultimately opens out to the Irish Sea and the southern reaches of Morecambe Bay.

As the path bears sharply round to the right, a track joins the main path from Underbank Road. Local people call this area 'Ramper Pot'. A 'Ramper' is a Lamprey Eel once common and caught in the River Wyre in a wicker 'Pot'. Follow this route and your walk will take you to Wyre Estuary Country Park.



Turn over to continue!