

Lancashire Walks

Rawtenstall



The ELR which should stand for Excellent Little Railway but in fact stands for more descriptively East Lancashire Railway. It runs from Heywood through Bury to Rawtenstall and is a most marvellous example of a preserved railway run by an outstanding team of volunteers. On most weekends throughout the year a steam or diesel service is run which is extended into the week during the summer (May to early September). Such commitment is breathtaking and deserves support. Walkers wishing to explore the Irwell Valley can use the railway to bring them back to their starting point. As it happens the Irwell Sculpture Trail runs parallel with the ELR providing many options for walkers. The walk described is just one example. A perfect way to spend the bank holiday.

Start: Rawtenstall ELR station. this is close by the A682 just out of the town centre towards Manchester.

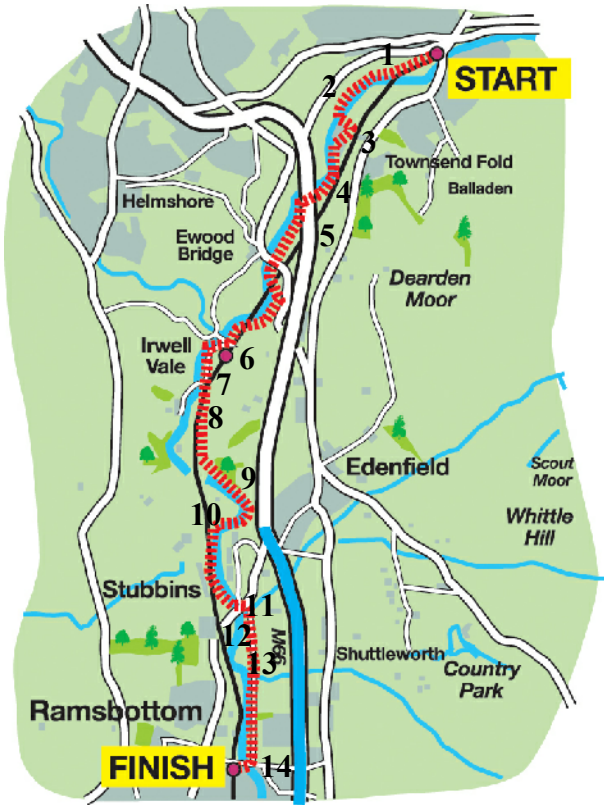
Distance: 7 km or 4½ miles

Time: 2 hours

Terrain: Easy and mainly flat.

Maps: OS Explorer 287 West Pennine Moors & OS OL 21 South Pennines

Directions: From the station follow the footpath on its right skirting the terminus buildings so that the railway is on the left. **(Pic 1)** Keep on the path as passes the Old Cobblers Inn on your right towards a prominent mill chimney. The way passes under an arch to enter a flagged garden. Keep ahead. Quickly you reach a pastoral scene with the River Irwell on the left. **(Pic 2)** After passing a riverside cottage you arrive at a lane. Here turn left and cross the river on a road bridge. Walking north to south waymarkers for the trail were not always easy to pick up when the route was checked, especially on this next section. Walking towards the level crossing turn right into a seemingly unlikely area of commercial units. **(Pic 3)** At the end turn right onto a path that is on the left of a mesh fence and fluorescent yellow gatepost. **(Pic 4)** This leads round into a sheet metal yard. A right turn between buildings will bring you back to the riverside path. Soon this leads beneath the busy A56. **(Pic 5)** After crossing a lane at the next bridge the trail reaches the small community of Irwell Vale. Once again there is a dearth of waymarkers but your way right (not through the subway) and then left following the pointer of an elaborate sign post. **(Pic 6)** After passing a converted chapel on the right keep ahead through a rather up market residential area. Do not cross the bridge **(Pic 7)** but keep ahead on a riverside path as it enters a wooded stretch and soon you will find yourself walking alongside the railway again. 200m along turn left under the railway **(Pic 8)** and then continue alongside it. A short distance along there is a sculpture to view on the hillside to the left. This next part of the walk is rather attractive as trail, rail and water find their own route through the valley, sometimes together and sometimes apart. Here you will come across more art work that gives the trail its name. Just before Strongstry **(Pic 9)** turn right to cross the river again. Keep ahead through the settlement and before reaching the railway bridge **(Pic 10)** turn left past the terrace end onto a footpath. This brings you back to the river, now on your left. After 500m 8mins you will reach the edge of a residential area. Again the way is not signed but it follows a narrow path between the rear of houses and their riverside allotments/gardens. **(Pic 11)** This brings you out onto the busy A 676 Bolton Road. **(Pic 12)** Turn left over the river and then right in front of a dilapidated factory building. You will soon come to open riverside meadows. Across the valley you will notice the Peel Tower on top of Holcombe Moor. After crossing a footbridge the trail takes you towards a mill with an imposing chimney, **(Pic 13)** then veers leftwards to put you on a footpath that takes you through a semi-industrial complex. Keep ahead and on reaching Bridge Street turn right past a hairdresser's with a rather arresting sign, **(Pic 14)** and walk over the river to reach Ramsbottom station.



Map by Chris Wyatt at the Blackpool Gazette

Pic 1



Pic 2



Pic 3



Pic 4



Pic 5



Pic 6



Pic 7



Pic 8



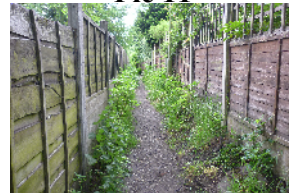
Pic 9



Pic 10



Pic 11



Pic 12



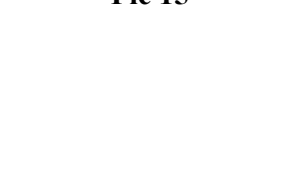
Pic 13



Pic 14



Pic 15



Pic 16

