

Forty eight EARLESTOWN – SANKEY VIADUCT.

A short rail trip across Chat Moss, then a visit to a railway wonder of the Georgian world. It's a bit of a road walk at either end (or use buses from bus station) but the middle stretch is very pleasant indeed. On Fridays in there is a thriving open-air market at Earlestown.

Catch a stopping train to Earlestown. *After Patricroft the train runs on lines floated over the Barton Moss and Chat Moss peat bogs. There are views of winter hills to the north and then the mills of Atherton and Leigh.*

Alight at Earlestown station. *It was once a major north, south, east, and west rail junction, built for The Grand Junction Railway. Notice the sharp curves on this early line.*

Leave the station via platform 5 (the Warrington platform) and head straight down the approach road passing The Sunbeam pub.

Bear right along the main road for some way. *Notice the unusual parish church down an avenue on the left.*

After passing the Wargrave Inn take Bradlegh Road on the right. *(The site of Vulcan Foundry is just beyond this corner across the Bowling Green. Beyond is Vulcan Village built for the foundry workers and now nicely renovated).*

Pass the bus stop and take the path that goes at forty-five degrees left across the grass from the corner of Bradlegh Road with Tyler Road.

Go through the stile and cross the small bridge over the stream. At the end of this path U turn to your right to join the towpath alongside the St Helens Canal *(built to link all the industry of St Helens with Warrington and the Mersey).*

Follow the towpath with the canal on your right and the Sankey Brook to your left. *(At the beginning of this very pleasant countryside stretch the brook is still tidal).*

Eventually you will see the Sankey viaduct ahead of you. *This nine arch viaduct of stone and brick was constructed in 1829 to the designs of George Stephenson for the Liverpool and Manchester Railway. Such a large structure made quite an impact in the time of George IV. Notice the classical Greek style with dentelles supporting the ledges of the parapets. I suspect that the ledges inside the arches were to support the massive wooden arch formers that were used during the construction.*

Continue under the viaduct. *On this stretch the canal has been filled in but there are plans to bring it back to navigation.*

Where the path meets the road turn right to go back into Earlestown. At the top of the hill on your right is the large site of the former railway waggon works of the London and NorthWestern Railway. *These were set up and then first managed by William Hardman Earle, after whom the town was named.*

Pass in front of The Griffin Hotel. *This is typical of large pubs built to serve hundreds of engineers and thirsty foundry workers c.f. The Grapes Hotel in Peel Green. It does serve real ales. Opposite are some of the gable walls of the original waggon works.*

Cross the road ahead towards the Wellington pub. *This is now called Earle Street!*

At the Ram's Head Hotel there is a crossroads and you have an option

[OPTION: On a Friday go left up market street to visit the open air market in the centre of which is the Newton Obelisk.

Further on is the large redbrick town hall (*some mining subsidence*) with a tall clock tower and with a South African War memorial. *The town also has a Tesco, Wilkinsons and Netto if you need any other shopping.*]

Otherwise go right down Queen Street to Earlestown station which is on the right. *Notice the neo-Tudor buildings here. These were constructed for the Grand Junction Railway. The weather vane is mounted on the base of the old signal post that emerged from the roof.*

Catch a train back to Eccles

CATEGORY: SHORT EASY.
 ARCHITECTURE, COUNTRY, CANAL, PUB,
 CAFES, MARKET.
RAIL FARE: category two.

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