

Liskeard & Looe Union Canal



1. Moorswater

The canal originally terminated in 2 basins. There are lime kilns on both sides of the valley. To the east are 2 lime kilns near a pair of cottages and to the west a lime kiln stands between the road and the East Looe River. Beside the river are the remains of an undershot water wheel which powered a tramroad incline to the canal. Whilst Moorswater was the terminus of the canal it was also the terminus of the Liskeard and Caradon Railway which reached Moorswater in 1846 and allowed the transshipment of copper and tin ore to Looe via the canal. This allowed vast quantities of coal and iron to be transported back to Moorswater and thence to the mines.

2. Coombe Junction

From the north end of the station platform, a footpath heads northwards to Lamellion Bridge. The bridge has two arches, the eastern one to accommodate the canal, and dates from the construction of the railway in 1859. the footpath continues towards the Moorswater railway viaduct; the drainage channel between the path and the parallel railway line follows the line of the canal.

From the south end of the platform, the footpath runs alongside the narrowed canal channel. The track to Coombe House crosses the canal by what appears to be an original canal bridge, at the tail of a lock (with a gate recess in its east wall).

3. Lodge Barton Crossing

Immediately north of the level crossing, on the east side of the railway, there is the east wall (with gate recess) of a lock.

4. Trussel Bridge

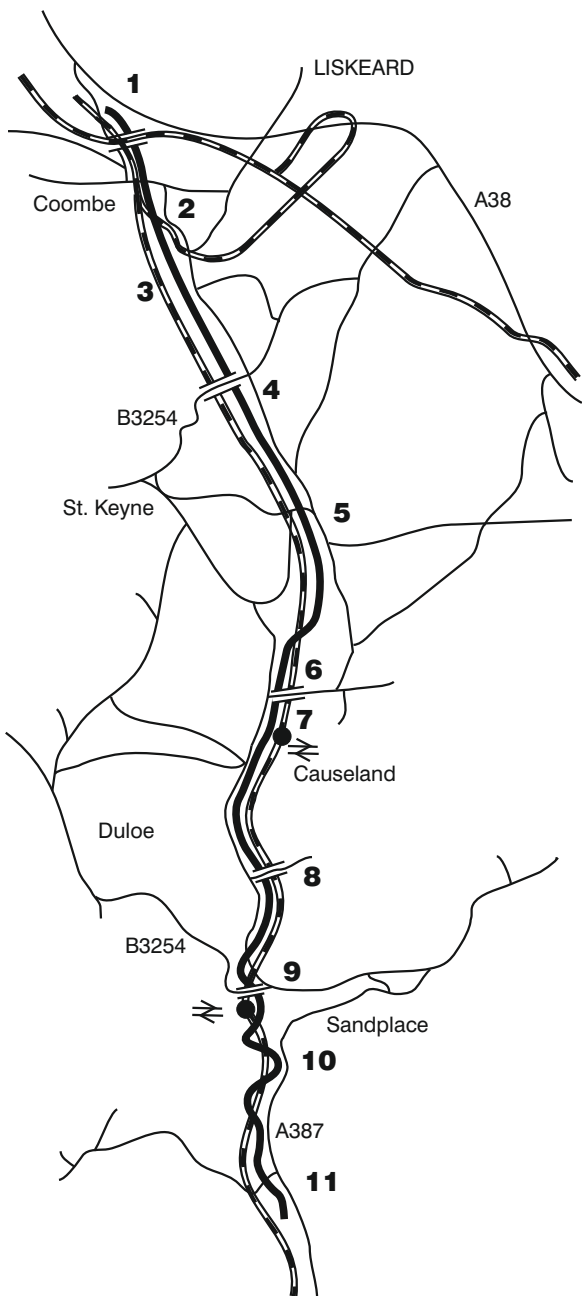
Again of two arches, the eastern one being for the canal, this bridge carries the B3254 road. The bed of the canal (with traces of masonry walling) is visible on the east side of the railway.

5. Landreast Bridge

A flat span carries the road over the railway, with an arches span to its east over the canal. The canal bed can be seen on the opposite side of the railway line from the platform of St Keyne Station. The canal is crossed (at the tail of a lock chamber) by a low level bridge which was used until the arrival of the railway.

6. Landlooe Bridge

This bridge has a high arch over the canal on its west side, a central flat span over the railway and a small eastern arch over the East Looe River. A canal lock



== Bridge

— Canal

— Railway

—●— Railway Station

chamber is situated under and immediately south of the bridge. It has gate recesses in its stone walls and is crossed at its tail by the original canal bridge.

7. Causeland Station

A lock chamber lies between the road and the station platform. Immediately north of the access track, a gate recess can be seen in the east side wall of the lock. Water trickles over the sill at the head of the lock, close to the platform shelter. The water-filled bed of the canal extends both north and south from the station.

8. Plashford Bridge

The water-filled canal channel passes under the western arch of the bridge. The lock chamber on the north side is hardly visible in summer, but the sound of rushing water can be heard as it passes over the sill at the head of the lock.

9. Sandplace Bridge

Just north of Sandplace Station, the road crosses the railway by a flat span; there is a blocked central arch, while the western arch spans the canal bed. Further west again lies the East Looe River, with a limekiln on its east bank. Barges had carried sand up the river to this point, where there were two short arms off the main channel. This led Priestley, in his "Navigable Rivers and Canals" (1831), to state incorrectly that the canal had a one-mile branch to Sandplace.

10. Sandplace

A limekiln stands at the south-east corner of the B3254/A387 road junction. To the west, the canal bed lies alongside a private car park and extends north and south parallel to the road. To the south, it then swings to the far side of the railway and returns to the road side by passing under a low railway bridge (visible from the road) which severely restricted headroom for barges.

11. Terras Lock

An arched stone bridge carries the Trenant road over the canal, between the main A387 road and the railway level crossing. Terras Lock is situated immediately north of the bridge. At the north end of the lock, a sluice consisting of wooden stop planks set in grooves in the lock wall was formed after the canal's closure. Some remains of parts of the lock gates can be seen nearby. The canal channel entered the river via the low railway bridge about 200 yards to the south.

HISTORY

The idea of the canal to carry sand and lime inland from Looe was first mooted in 1777 but it was not until 1823 that the engineer James Green (who designed the Bude Canal) reported on a canal with inclined planes to overcome the gradients of the East Looe Valley.

Green's plan was thought by the local backers to be too complicated and so a new survey was carried out, by John Edgcumbe, Robert Coad and Thomas Esterbrook. The Act for the canal's construction was passed in 1825. the waterway was to be 5 7/8 miles long and 4ft deep, with 24 locks measuring 50ft by 10ft and a larger lock (57ft by 13ft 6in) at Terras Pill, giving a total rise of 156ft.

The canal was opened throughout in March 1828 and, unusually for canals, cost little more to build than estimated and then regularly made profits.

THE RAILWAY

By 1856, output from the Caradon copper mines had increased to the extent that the canal was working at capacity, carrying 48,000 tons (mostly coal, copper ore, limestone and granite). To avoid losing trade, the canal company proposed to build a railway (intended to supplement rather than replace the canal) from Moorswater to Looe. Work on the line started in 1858 and was completed at the end of 1860.

The canal above Sandplace became disused soon after the opening of the railway but small boatloads continued to be carried on the lower section until about 1910.

TRAIN SERVICES

The Looe Valley Line (Liskeard – Looe) has stations adjoining the canal at Coombe Junction, St Keyne, Causeland and Sandplace. Few trains stop at Coombe, but the northern end of the canal is just a half-mile walk downhill from Liskeard station. For train times, phone National Rail Enquiries on 08457 484950.

Travelling by train enables a number of lock chambers and lengths of canal bed to be seen in addition to those features described in this leaflet.

GUIDED WALKS IN THE LOOE VALLEY

Guided walks take place regularly in the Looe Valley throughout the summer. For further details contact one of the information outlets listed on the next page.

WALKING ROUTES IN THE LOOE VALLEY

*Excellent walking routes are given in
the following publications:*

Looe Valley Line: Trails from the Track

A free pack giving details of ten walks from
the Looe Valley Line produced by the
Devon and Cornwall Rail Partnership.

Around Looe, Polperro & Liskeard by *Bob Acton*

Includes details of the 12 self-guided walks
packed full of history and points of interest: £3.99

TOURIST INFORMATION

South East Cornwall Discovery Centre

Mill Pool, West Looe, Cornwall, PL13 2AF

Telephone: 01503 262777

Email: discovery@caradon.gov.uk

Website: www.southeastcornwall.co.uk

Looe Tourist Information Centre

The Guildhall, East Looe, Cornwall

Telephone: 01503 262072

Liskeard Information Centre

Foresters Hall, Pike Street, Liskeard, Cornwall PL14 3JE

Telephone: 01579 349148

FURTHER READING

Caradon and Looe – The Canal, Railways and Mines

- *Michael Messenger* 2nd edition

The Canals of South West England - *Charles Hadfield*

Published by David & Charles

**Published by the
INLAND WATERWAYS ASSOCIATION © 2024**

This leaflet is one of a series being published by the West Country Branch of the IWA to encourage greater use and appreciation of the West Country's canals and rivers. The IWA is a national charity, founded in 1946, which cares for our waterways heritage. To find out more or to join, write to: IWA at Unit 16B, Chiltern Court, Asheridge Road, Chesham HP5 2PX.

Although great care has been taken in preparing this leaflet, no responsibility can be accepted for any errors or their consequences.