

# EXPLORING THE EDEN VIADUCTS

## SMARDALE GILL VIADUCT

Also owned by the Northern Viaduct Trust, Smardale Gill is about three miles (5km.) west of Kirkby Stephen. This dramatic 90 feet high structure, with 14 arches, snakes its way across a narrow valley and is best reached by walking about one mile from Smardale. The approach is via a footpath along the former trackbed, now a local nature reserve managed by the Cumbria Wildlife Trust, which also owns the trackbed onwards to Ravenstonedale; this can be also walked. The old railway first passes under Smardale Viaduct on the Settle-Carlisle Railway before reaching Smardale Gill. Longer walks, giving spectacular views of the viaduct, start from Newbiggin-on-Lune and Ravenstonedale.

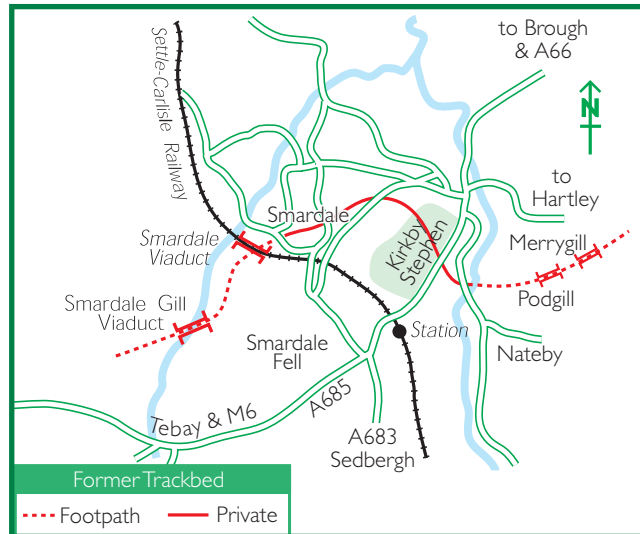
## THE NORTHERN VIADUCT TRUST

All three viaducts are in the care of the Northern Viaduct Trust, which depends entirely on grants and donations for their long-term maintenance. If you enjoyed your walk, a donation would be much appreciated. Please forward any contributions to Northern Viaduct Trust, c/o Saint & Co. Chartered Accountants, Poets' Walk, Penrith, Cumbria CA11 7HJ, including your name and address, stating whether you are a UK taxpayer for Grant Aid purposes and if you need a receipt.

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For further information visit our website or contact Kirkby Stephen Tourist Information Office  
Tel: 017683-71199  
[www.nvt.org.uk](http://www.nvt.org.uk)

## LOCATION



For buses from Kirkby Stephen station phone Cumbria Traveline 0870 608 2608.

## GRATEFUL THANKS

The NVT would like to express its grateful thanks to all the following organisations, who have supported the project and offered financial assistance and services.

European Community Regional Development Fund, Rail Property Ltd, Railway Heritage Trust, Friends of the Lake District, DEFRA - Stewardship Scheme, Awards for All, Manifold Trust, Evans Trust, Cumbria County Council, FWAG, Eden District Council, CWMET, English Heritage, Countryside Agency, RMC (CEMEX), Lake District National Park Authority - Path Training Team, P Mawdsley - Contractor, Blackett-Ord Consulting Engineers, BTCV, Weasdale Nurseries, Fawcett Fencing, East Cumbria Countryside Project, Upper Eden Tree Service, Upper Eden Rotary Club, Inglewood Computer Services, Want Media, Stainmore Railway Company and Cerberus Printing, Appeal Donations.

Brochure supported by



ENGLISH HERITAGE

Supported by the Countryside Agency through the DEFRA Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund



Photographs by Peter W Robinson and Frank Jackson

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Just above and to the south of Kirkby Stephen ran the long forgotten and scenically majestic Stainmore Railway. For a 100 years it linked Darlington with Tebay and Penrith, a 60-mile steam-worked railway across some spectacularly engineered viaducts.

The Northern Viaducts Round follows just over a mile of the former railway, which provided an essential link between the coalfields of South Durham and the iron and steel industries of the Furness district of Lancashire and West Cumberland. Opened in 1861 between Barnard Castle and Tebay, it crossed the Pennines and reached its highest point at Stainmore Summit, 1370 feet above sea level, the second highest railway in England. At its peak in the 1880s the line carried a million tons of coke each year to feed the blast furnaces on the Cumbrian coast.

As iron and steel works closed, or obtained their fuel from other sources, the line came to the end of its usefulness. Closure of the through route came in 1962 in the face of strong opposition. A short section survived a few years longer to serve Hartley Quarry, finally closing in 1975.



The engineer for this dramatic railway was Thomas Bouch, born in 1822 at Thursby near Carlisle. Later in life he designed the first bridge across the Firth of Tay at Dundee, completed in 1877, for which he received a knighthood. Two years later, however, the bridge collapsed in a storm as a train was crossing it, with the

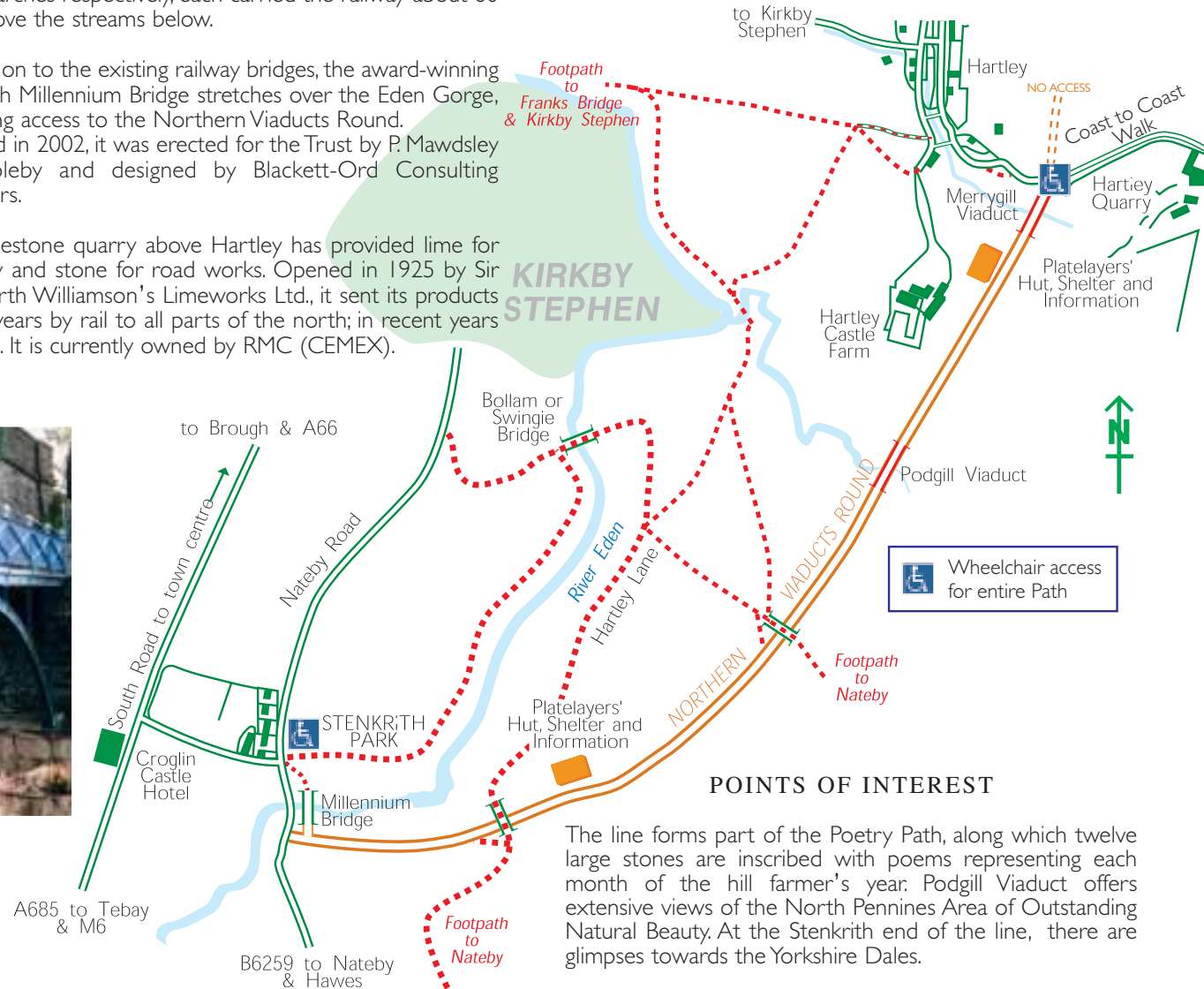
loss of 75 lives. A man in anguish, Bouch died at his home in Moffat the following year.

Near Kirkby Stephen, Merrygill and Podgill Viaducts were originally built to carry only a single line of rails. Both viaducts were widened to double track in 1889. With nine and eleven arches respectively, each carried the railway about 80 feet above the streams below.

In addition to the existing railway bridges, the award-winning Stenkrith Millennium Bridge stretches over the Eden Gorge, providing access to the Northern Viaducts Round. Opened in 2002, it was erected for the Trust by P. Mawdsley of Appleby and designed by Blackett-Ord Consulting Engineers.

The limestone quarry above Hartley has provided lime for industry and stone for road works. Opened in 1925 by Sir Hedworth Williamson's Limeworks Ltd., it sent its products for 50 years by rail to all parts of the north; in recent years by road. It is currently owned by RMC (CEMEX).

# THE NORTHERN VIADUCT TRUST



## POINTS OF INTEREST

The line forms part of the Poetry Path, along which twelve large stones are inscribed with poems representing each month of the hill farmer's year. Podgill Viaduct offers extensive views of the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. At the Stenkrith end of the line, there are glimpses towards the Yorkshire Dales.

The railway huts, marked on the map, provide historical information. The line offers a circular route from Kirkby Stephen with access for wheel chairs, buggies, cyclists and horses at both ends of the path - see map.

See our information panels at the railway huts, marked on the map as orange boxes