

# THE ROAD ACROSS LANCASTER SANDS



*Lancaster Sands, Lancashire*

by William Powell Frith and Thomas Creswick, 1848

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/arts/yourpaintings/paintings/lancaster-sands-lancashire-89990>

“Before the railway was made, the old way of crossing the sands from Lancaster to Ulverstone must have been very striking, both from the character of the scenery around and a sense of danger, which cannot but have given something of the piquancy of adventure to the journey. The channels are constantly shifting, particularly after heavy rains, when they are perilously uncertain. For many centuries past, two guides have conducted travellers over them. Their duty is to observe the changes, and find fordable points. In all seasons and states of the weather this was their duty, and in times of storm and fog it must have been fraught with danger” (Edwin Waugh, 1860)

This booklet is a short summary of some of the things I have found interesting about the over-sands road before the railway came along. I hope you enjoy browsing through it, and the links within it.

**Nick Thorne, Bodian Photography, 2013**



**An etching from a picture by Turner - Lancaster Sands c1828 (Tate Gallery)**

<http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/turner-lancaster-sands-t04534>

# INTRODUCTION

Why did people use this route, when as the old saying goes; “Kent and Keer have parted many a good man and his meear”? The main reason is that it is 8-12 miles from Hest Bank to Cartmel. By land it was 20 miles or so north to Kendal, then 15-20 miles over rough roads to Cartmel and Furness peninsulas. The land distance was shorter after the Ulverston to Carnforth Turnpike was completed in 1820, but it was still a fair distance. And, the roads in the area were nothing like they are now – they were in very poor condition, mainly because not many people in the Cartmel area had carts or carriages.

There was also a crossing from Kents Bank to Silverdale – this was probably the route used when driving stock – possibly to Cow’s Mouth at Silverdale. Edwin Waugh in 1861 described a great herd of cattle moving slowly across the sands from Kent’s Bank. (see [Page 206](#))



*David Cox – Sketch for ‘Crossing Lancaster Sands’ date unknown (Tate Gallery)*

<http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/cox-sketch-for-crossing-lancaster-sands-a00185>



***Lancaster Sands 1842 – David Cox the Elder***

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/arts/yourpaintings/paintings/lancaster-sands>



***Crossing Lancaster Sands c1834-1840 – David Cox the Elder***

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/arts/yourpaintings/paintings/crossing-lancaster-sands-171676>

<http://www.whitworth.manchester.ac.uk/medialibrary/mygallery/itemdisplay.php?groupirn=289&irn=984&add=984&lower=10>

# CHRONOLOGY

- AD79 – Emperor agricola Tacitus probably meant this crossing when he described the dangerous passage of his army to the north.
- Roman era in general – it’s clear that the Romans had a road across Cartmel “from the shore at Kents Bank to Sandgate at Flookburgh”, and this road has been excavated on the Furness side of the Leven Estuary.
- 1322 – Robert the Bruce and his soldiers crossed the sands when invading Lancashire. Lanercost Chronicle says “They went further beyond the sands of Leven to Cartmel, taking away cattle and spoil, and so they crossed the sands of Kent as far as the town of Lancaster which they burnt.” – <http://ia700402.us.archive.org/2/items/chronicleoflaner00maxwuoft/chronicleoflaner00maxwuoft.pdf> - page 238
- 1660s - George Fox, Quaker – Taken across the sands to Lancaster Jail with an armed guard of 14-15 men.
- 1759 – in May John Wesley crossed from Hest Bank on a Friday evening across what he referred to as the ‘Seven-mile’ sands, Locals told him it was too late to start, but he raced the tide across the Bay to Flookburgh, where he spent the night – then crossed the Leven to Furness.
- 1857 – the building of the railway effectively ended the road across the sands as the main highway.

# TRAVELLERS



**Turner – Lancaster Sands (Birmingham Museums and Art Galleries)**

<http://www.bmagprints.org.uk/image/750379/j-m-w-turner-lancaster-sands>

Early travellers often described the crossing in journals, diaries, or books – partly because of its novelty (and excitement). The links take you to copies of the books – which are all well worth reading, as the descriptions are far lengthier than the brief extracts I have shown. You can also download pdf versions of most of these books from the relevant websites.

1660	George Fox	From his Journal of 1660 – he describes how he was arrested at Swarthmoor, and how 15-16 men were set guard on him, followed by a description of being taken across the Sands to Lancaster Assizes. <a href="http://www.strecorsoc.org/gfox/ch13.html">http://www.strecorsoc.org/gfox/ch13.html</a>
1727	Sir Thomas Lowther	In correspondence between Sir Thomas Lowther and his steward at Holker there is the obvious concern over the sands crossing. James Lowther (MP for Cumberland) travelled to Whitehaven from London and was met by the steward at Lancaster so that he could be safely helped across the sands. Extracts from the letters are in the CWAAS paper of 1883 (see Bodian webpages - <a href="http://www.bodian.co.uk/road-across-the-sands.html">http://www.bodian.co.uk/road-across-the-sands.html</a> ) They make fascinating reading.

1769	Thomas Gray	Journal in the Lakes (no on-line copy found as yet).
1774	Thomas West	<p>Antiquities of Furness (page 14 onwards, and map) – says that <i>“On a fine day there is not a more pleasant sea ride in the Kingdom”</i>.</p> <p>He adds <i>“What most attracts the notice of the traveller is not the objects of the surrounding country (though they are fine) but the sands themselves. For when he has got a few miles from the shore, the nature of the plain on which he treads cannot but suggest a series of ideas of a more sublime kind than those of rural elegance, and which will therefore gain a superior attention. The plain is then seemingly immense in extent, continued in a dead level, and uniform in appearance. As he pursues his often trackless way, he will recollect, that probably but a few hours before, the whole expanse was covered with some fathoms of water, and that in a few more it will as certainly be covered again. At the same time he may also perceive, on his left hand, the retreated ocean ready to obey the mysterious laws of its irresistible movement, without any visible barrier to stay it a moment where it is. These last considerations, though they may not be sufficient to alarm, must yet be able to rouse the mind to a state of more than ordinary attention; which, co-operating with the other singular ideas of the prospect, must affect it in a very sublime and unusual manner.”</i></p> <p><a href="http://books.google.co.uk/books?id=cjdAAAAIAAJ&amp;printsec=frontcover&amp;dq=Antiquities+of+Furness&amp;hl=en&amp;sa=X&amp;ei=UN3yUI7HEoag0AX4j4DwBw&amp;ved=0CDEQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&amp;q=sands&amp;f=false">http://books.google.co.uk/books?id=cjdAAAAIAAJ&amp;printsec=frontcover&amp;dq=Antiquities+of+Furness&amp;hl=en&amp;sa=X&amp;ei=UN3yUI7HEoag0AX4j4DwBw&amp;ved=0CDEQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&amp;q=sands&amp;f=false</a></p>
1792	Adam Walker	<p>Remarks made in a tour from London to the Lakes – page 51 onwards, describes his crossing of the sands when a thick fog descended. And he concludes that the <i>“although singular, it is not an unpleasant ride”</i>.</p> <p><a href="http://books.google.co.uk/books?id=m59bAAAAQAAJ&amp;printsec=frontcover&amp;source=gbs_ge_summary_r&amp;cad=0#v=onepage&amp;q&amp;f=false">http://books.google.co.uk/books?id=m59bAAAAQAAJ&amp;printsec=frontcover&amp;source=gbs_ge_summary_r&amp;cad=0#v=onepage&amp;q&amp;f=false</a></p>
1794	Anne Radcliffe	<p>Observations during a tour to the Lakes – in which she describes crossing the ‘vast and desolate plains’ of the sands (Page 407-413</p> <p><a href="http://archive.org/stream/journeymadeinsum02radcuoft#page/406/mode/2up">http://archive.org/stream/journeymadeinsum02radcuoft#page/406/mode/2up</a>)</p>
1819	William Green	<p>The Tourists New Guide (page 13 onwards – including Thomas West’s description). <i>“In short on a fine summer day a ride across this testuary and that of Leven mentioned a little further on to a speculative stranger or to one who is habituated to consider the charms of nature abitractedly will afford a variety of most entertaining ideas. Indeed the objects here presented to the eye are several of them so like in kind to what will frequently occur in the tour of the lakes some of them are much more magnificent from extent and others so truly peculiar that it seems rather surprising that this journey should not often be considered by travellers from the south as one of the first curiosities of the tour in beauty as well as in occurrence”</i></p>

		<p>† “The above description of this curious and pleasing ride is, far as it goes, just, but not characteristic. What most attracts the notice of the traveller, is not the objects of the surrounding country (though they are fine), but <i>the sands themselves</i>. For when he has got a few miles from the shore, the nature of the plain on which he treads cannot but suggest a series of ideas of a more sublime kind than those of rural elegance, and which will therefore gain superior attention. The plain is then seemingly immense in extent, continued on in a dead level, and uniform in appearance. As he pursues his <i>often-trackless</i> way, he will recollect, that probably but a few hours before, the whole expanse was covered with some fathoms of water, and that in a few more it will as certainly be covered again. At the same time he may also perceive, on his left the retreated ocean ready to obey the mysterious laws of its irresistible movement, without any visible barrier to stay it a moment where it is. These last considerations, though they may not be sufficient to alarm, must yet be able to rouse the mind to a state more than ordinary attention; which, co-operating with the other singular ideas of the prospect, must affect it in a very sublime and unusual manner. This the bare appearance of the sands will</p> <p>(extract from Green's book)  <a href="http://books.google.co.uk/books?id=1aguAAAAMAAJ&amp;dq=tourists%20new%20guide%20william%20green&amp;pg=PA13#v=twopage&amp;q&amp;f=true">http://books.google.co.uk/books?id=1aguAAAAMAAJ&amp;dq=tourists%20new%20guide%20william%20green&amp;pg=PA13#v=twopage&amp;q&amp;f=true</a></p>
1820	Leonard Atkins	<p>Letters from the Lakes pages 21–31 – gives a very descriptive picture of the crossing (and other local activities). See the copy below.</p> <p><i>“After crossing several very fine streams we arrived at what the driver called the Channel a river about ten times as wide as Ribble “Now” said my sister “we must either go back or swim over”. But judge my surprise, when we drove right into the stream; I own I felt afraid for a moment. But my sister's vivacity soon dissipated my fears. A more picturesque, grotesque, touresque, or whatever other esque scene you may think fit to call it, I think I never saw. There could not be fewer than forty carts, gigs, horses, chaises, etc. with men, women, children, dogs, and I can hardly tell what beside, all in the river at once. My sister wished that Mr Hope had been there to have taken a sketch of them. It would have been a fine model, she observed, to draw the Passage of the Red Sea from. A painter had nothing to do but transform the carts into chariots - the smock frocks of the drivers into armour - the old slouch hats into helmets - and the whips into swords, and the picture was sketched. The waves dashing through the wheels - the horses up to the breast in water - the vehicles, some driving one way, some another in all imaginable confusion - the carriers swearing - the drivers cracking their whips - the women and children screaming - and the apparent impossibility of any of them ever escaping - formed altogether such a coup d'oeil as I never had seen nor ever expected to see.”</i></p>



		<p>I was aroused, by the bustle of preparation, about five o'clock, on one of the finest mornings my eyes ever opened. I hastened down into the travellers' room, where I found my father, uncle, and sister already assembled. I was regaling my senses with the fumés of the coffee, when the driver unceremoniously burst into the room:—"For God's sake," said he, "make haste. The tide is down, and we should have been, by this time, at Hest Bank. If you delay, we shall all be drowned." He waited for no reply; but retired as abruptly as he entered. My uncle drank off his coffee without appearing to taste it: he then pushed away his cup—"I do not relish the idea of drowning," said my uncle; "it would form a very disagreeable opening to our adventures." "I think," rejoined my sister, "it would be the most disagreeable prospect the lakes could afford."—"If," said my father, "you only disturb yourself, brother, with the idea that drowning would be an awkward commencement to our adventures, you may console yourself with the assurance, that it will actually be our last." My father's assurance seemed by no means to cheer my uncle's despondency. Indeed we might, all, except my father, be rather said to break our fast, than sate our appetites.</p> <p><a href="http://archive.org/stream/remainsofjohnbri00briglia">http://archive.org/stream/remainsofjohnbri00briglia</a></p>
1830	AM Wakefield	<p>Describes the passage following the <i>guide</i> "a strange wild-looking figure, with masses of long unkempt hair, as rough as the sheepskin thrown over the old white horse". "After seeing us across the dangerous parts, this queer uncouth figure suddenly appeared at the carriage window, thrust in an old cap, also made of sheepskin, and asked a recognition of his services."</p> <p>See slideshow in 'Cartmel Priory and Sketches of North Lonsdale'  <a href="http://www.bodian.co.uk/old-books-and-guides.html">http://www.bodian.co.uk/old-books-and-guides.html</a></p>

1834	Edwards Baines	<p>“A Companion to the Lakes of Cumberland, Westmorland, and Lancashire”. – This has a fantastic description of the crossing in his section ‘An Excursion on Horseback’, page 230 onwards.</p> <p><b>As the most easy and agreeable way of accomplishing my purpose, I took a horse from Lancaster, and directed my course first to those parts which I had not previously seen. Setting out at the same hour as the “over-Sands” coach to Ulverston, I arrived at Hestbank, on the shores of Morecambe-bay, three miles and a half from Lancaster, about five in the afternoon. Here a little caravan was collected, waiting the proper time to cross the trackless sands left bare by the receding tide. I soon saw two persons set out in a gig, and, following them, I found that one of them was the Guide appointed to conduct travellers, and the other a servant, who was driving his master’s gig to the Cartmel shore, and was to return with the horse the same evening. He had of course no time to lose, and had begun his journey at the earliest possible hour. We found the Sands firm and level, except the slight wrinkles produced by the ripple of the waves, but they were still wet, having only just been left by the sea. The Guide appeared to drive with caution, and in no place went further than a mile from land.</b></p>
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		<p>The day was exceedingly fine, and the prospects in crossing over the sands were splendid. The whole coast of the bay, from Pile Castle round to the shore beyond Lancaster,—the stern crags of Warton and Arnside-fells on the right,—further eastward, the well-known form of Ingleborough, whose broad head is visible from every considerable hill in Lancashire, Westmoreland, and Cumberland, and seems to lift itself in serene and unchanging majesty over the neighbouring heights,—the broken and picturesque shores of the Kent, beautifully wooded, and forming a vista to the eye,—the fells of Cartmel rising in the mid-distance, their sides hung with forests, and several ornamental parks lying round their base,—and above and far beyond them, the noble chain of the Westmoreland and Cumberland mountains, whose lofty summits, clothed with light, formed a sublime barrier stretching along the northern horizon ;—such are the principal features of a prospect, which is not the less beautiful because it rises from the level expanse of the sands, and which was to me the more interesting from the novelty of my own situation.</p> <p><a href="http://books.google.co.uk/books?id=vNJCAAAAYAAJ&amp;printsec=frontcover&amp;source=gbs_ge_summary_r&amp;cad=0#v=onepage&amp;q&amp;f=false">http://books.google.co.uk/books?id=vNJCAAAAYAAJ&amp;printsec=frontcover&amp;source=gbs_ge_summary_r&amp;cad=0#v=onepage&amp;q&amp;f=false</a> Which has been expanded into a short story by John Roby <a href="http://www.readbookonline.net/readOnLine/54230/">http://www.readbookonline.net/readOnLine/54230/</a>.</p>
1847	Elizabeth Gaskell	Her short story, <i>The Sexton's Hero</i> (1847) is all about the tragedy of crossing the Sands - <a href="http://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/g/gaskell/elizabeth/sexton/">http://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/g/gaskell/elizabeth/sexton/</a>
1849	Arnside Directory	Arnside Sands “are covered one hour with ships and another with carriages and pedestrians.”
1861	Edwin Waugh	Waugh wrote many travel books, and the ones of the north-west are all extremely interesting. The most localised for us is <i>Rambles in the Lake Country</i> , published by Heywood in 1861. <a href="http://books.google.co.uk/books?id=rPgGAAAAQAAJ&amp;printsec=frontcover&amp;source=gbs_ge_summary_r&amp;cad=0#v=onepage&amp;q&amp;f=false">http://books.google.co.uk/books?id=rPgGAAAAQAAJ&amp;printsec=frontcover&amp;source=gbs_ge_summary_r&amp;cad=0#v=onepage&amp;q&amp;f=false</a>

# ACCIDENTS



***Sands Road by Charles Jopling 1843***

The crossing was extremely hazardous due to shifting sands and the timing of the departure had to be perfect. The coach services between Ulverston and Lancaster had to be scheduled to accommodate the changing tides. On top of this, the channels were constantly shifting, particularly after heavy rains, when they are perilously uncertain. It was safest to cross at spring-tides; the water then is more completely drained out, and the force of the tide sweeps the bottom clean from mud and sediment.

Not surprisingly, there were many accidents and incidents – quite a few of which were fatal.

A comprehensive list of accidents and disasters on the Sands can be found in David Peter's book *'Cross Kent Sands'*, and another list in *Crossing Lancaster Sands*, published by the Ruskin Museum & Heysham Heritage Association (taken from the Lancaster Gazette). Over the 300 years to 1850, some 141 records of burials are in the Cartmel Priory registers. Although there were almost certainly many others.

A few incidents of interest are below:

1576	12 <sup>th</sup> September – one young man buried after being drowned in the 'brodwater'
1582	1 <sup>st</sup> August – The son of Leonard Rollinson of Furness Fell drowned at the Grainge
1633	10 <sup>th</sup> August – William Best, gentleman, drowned on Milthorp sands (upper part of Kent sands)
1802	21 <sup>st</sup> January – Oversands coach blown over – passengers escaped unhurt.
1803	Two men in a gig missed the ford when coming from Lancaster, one managed to swim ashore – the other wasn't found.

1808	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• John Wilkinson, Ironmaster of Lindale. Carried across the sands in a cast-iron coffin, when the tide came in and it had to be abandoned. It was found later in the sand and his journey was completed.</li> <li>• Horse and cart ran into quicksand near Silverdale. Driver escaped, horse drowned.</li> </ul>
1810	Clothier crossing the sands for trade with cart and two horses – was too late for the tide, and drowned.
1811	Coach fell on its side and 15 passengers dumped into the river. Coach sank, luggage drifted out to sea – passengers used the horses to get back to the shore.
1816	15 year old boy drowned below Priest Skeer – his mate swum ashore.
1817	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commercial traveller and wife started too late above Arnide and lost their horse and lace goods, but they were saved by a boat.</li> <li>• Coach from Ulverston got half way across to the 'Lyring', when it blew over. The nine passengers and coachman left the coach but made it to safety – the horses didn't.</li> </ul>
1818	A man was seen near Meathop, and was warned of the danger – he carried on and was immediately drowned.
1820	An idea to put land marks or refuges was proposed – but this never happened. To help travellers a powerful lantern was lit in a specially built upper room at the Hest Bank Hotel (originally "Sands Inn").
1821	Post chaise lost close to Hest Bank after being seen across the Keer in safety by the guide from Hest Bank. The post boy and one of the horses was drowned. The chaise was found not far from where the guide left them.
1821	Mail coach stuck fast in the mud during a blizzard. Passengers went back to the shore, whilst the driver stayed behind to set the horses free from their harnesses – but he was never seen again.
1822	A conjurer was travelling across the Sands with a farmer. The cart wheels sunk and the farmer unhitched and mounted the horse. The conjurer stayed with the cart believing that it would float – but he was washed out and drowned.
1824	A young couple crossed the channel safely – but then took a wrong direction and became surrounded by water. The young man was saved by the guide but the woman's dress floated her away despite attempts to save her as well.
1825	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The heavy rain made the sands difficult in October, and a man visiting friends with his son were lost – the body of the horse and the cart washed up the next day.</li> <li>• Coach from Lancaster to Ulverston was blown over in mid channel by a gale racing up the bay – one of the horses drowned but the coach was saved as everyone helped to put it back up on it's wheels and the remaining three horses carried on. Some of the luggage was left on the sands, and it was later seen near Arnside.</li> <li>• Another coach also got into trouble – the passengers and horses were saved, the coach was later washed up at Poulton.</li> </ul>

1827	A hearse and mourning coach got stuck on its way to Urswick – after the tide had ebbed the coffin was retrieved and interred a day late.
1828	28 <sup>th</sup> August – the oversands coach from Lancaster to Ulverston suddenly sank in the sands when the driver followed a track left by a drunken man who had galloped over the soft sand – which didn't take the weight of the coach. The passengers escaped, but Mr Meadows, a comedian turned back after he had reached land to try and save his luggage. He sank up to his armpits in the sand and was only rescued with difficulty. The horses were rescued with difficulty, but the coach wasn't refloated until the next tide.
1832	Coach lost in a 'soft-spot'.
1838	The house steward on Holme Island was caught in fog making the short journey at low tide from Grange. His body was found the next morning.
1846	Nine young people between 17 & 25 were drowned when returning to Cartmel from the Ulverston Whitsuntide fair. They were packed into a Flookburgh fisherman's cart, who missed the track and plunged into a hole by the rocks known as the 'Black Scarr' on the Leven sands. The hole had been created by a coasting vessel which had sunk and lain on the sands – the rush of the tide had worn a soft patch around the hull. The cart ran into this, and turned over throwing all the passengers into the sea. It was so quick that others around them did not see it happen. What makes it worse was that the reason for the journey was to buy wedding attire.
1847	Mr Fleming's coach, with a considerable number of passengers sank in the Keer sands – the passengers had to wade to safety and Mr Fleming stayed on to free the horses. The coach was extricated the next day.
1853	Reverend Wilson Rigg – travelled across the sands. Coach settled in soft mud, horses were removed and the outside passengers jumped off. Revd Rigg was inside and was not very well – so was wrapped up in clothes and rugs. No-one could open the doors as the coach had sunk so quickly the bottom of the doors were under the sand already. Revd Rigg was pulled through a window and taken to the shore. But he left behind his valise with documents connected to the new church of Grange. The coach reappeared on the tide at Holme Island a few months later, and the documents were recovered intact (and could prove that the church was 'his'). It was Reverend Rigg who added the suffix 'over-Sands' in around 1858 as he was annoyed at his post going to Grange in Borrowdale!
1857	Seven farm servants crossing to a hiring fair in Lancaster (on foot) were drowned when the tide came in. Their bodies were found on the sands the next day.
1857	In the same year, fourteen people on their way to Lancaster Fair were drowned after being delayed until midnight. The railway started running that year.

# COACHES



***Coach Crossing Lancaster Sands c1820 – Unknown Artist***

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/arts/yourpaintings/paintings/coach-crossing-lancaster-sands>

- The earliest coaches were known as ‘dillies’ with accommodation for three passengers. Dillies seems to be short for “Dilligence”, a coach holding few people, but one that was light – and therefore not so likely to get stuck.
- In 1785 a more substantial coach took over, which could hold thirteen people and heavy luggage. They ran every day except Sunday (page 279 – Stockdale’s Annals of Cartmel <http://archive.org/stream/annalescaermeol00stocgoog#page/n6/mode/2up>), which increased at one time to three to four a day. The coaches were pulled by four horses, and frequently got stuck because of their weight. Lighter and faster coaches were gradually introduced.
- Mrs Gaskell recalled a Victorian Sands Guide as “a square man sitting stern on his white horse, the better to be seen when daylight ebbs”. On foggy nights he blew a ram’s horn trumpet “to guide by the sound”.

- There were regular coaches “Over Sands” between Lancaster & Ulverston – even after the turnpike road was improved in the 1820s. They stopped in 1857 when railway was opened.
- *The Cumberland Pacquet* printed the times for a while, and the poster overleaf dates from around 1781. 5 shillings a passenger, 3 passengers – different departure times each day because of the tide. Services also continued across Duddon and estuary at Ravenglass to Whitehaven.
- Quite a few Inns and Hotels were involved. I have found references to the following being start or end points:

<b>Lancaster</b>	<b>Ulverston</b>
Sun Inn	Sun Inn
Kings Arms Inn	Bradyll’s Arms
Bear & Staff Inn	Kings Arms
Old Sir Simon’s Inn	

- In 1854 the RAPID oversands coach was even running on Sundays – but this only lasted a few years as the railway soon opened.
- If coaches stopped – they were quite likely to get stuck, and start sinking. Generally they were just abandoned – and sometimes had empty casks to help with bouyancy. If a coach began to stick, the horses would struggle – which would make things worse and they themselves soon began to sink – and the coachman would have to cut their harnesses to save them. The passengers would then have to get out and walk to the nearest shore – carrying their luggage if possible. Generally the coach would be found again on the sands within a few days – often full of sand – see the accidents section.
- Carriers also took goods across the Sands. John Higgins turned up at Swarthmoor Hall, Ulverston in the 18<sup>th</sup> century with “letters, iron ore, hopps, red herrings, books, sugar, vinegat, meat, paper, oysters, phisical things and chocolatta.”





**TIMES OF DEPARTURE OF THE  
OVER SANDS  
COACHES,  
FOR THE MONTH OF SEPTEMBER, 1848,  
Between ULVERSTON & LANCASTER.**

Lancaster to Ulverston.		
SEPTEMBER.		H. M.
Friday	1st	..7 30 a m
Saturday	2nd	..8 0 a m
Monday	4th	..9 0 a m
Tuesday	5th	..9 30 a m
Wednesday	6th	..10 30 a m
Thursday	7th	..10 30 a m
Friday	8th	..11 0 a m
Saturday	9th	..1 30 p m
Monday	11th	..2 0 p m
Tuesday	12th	..3 0 p m
Wednesday	13th	..3 30 p m
Thursday	14th	..4 0 p m
Friday	15th	..6 30 a m
Saturday	16th	..7 0 a m
Monday	18th	..8 0 a m
Tuesday	19th	..9 0 a m
Wednesday	20th	..16 30 a m
Thursday	21st	..10 30 a m
Friday	22nd	..1 30 p m
Saturday	23rd	..1 30 p m
Monday	25th	..2 30 p m
Tuesday	26th	..3 0 p m
Wednesday	27th	..6 0 a m
Thursday	28th	..6 30 a m
Friday	29th	..7 0 a m
Saturday	30th	..7 30 a m

Ulverston to Lancaster.		
SEPTEMBER.		H. M.
Friday	1st	..6 30 a m
Saturday	2nd	..7 0 a m
Monday	4th	..8 0 a m
Tuesday	5th	..9 0 a m
Wednesday	6th	..9 0 a m
Thursday	7th	..11 0 a m
Friday	8th	..11 30 a m
Saturday	9th	..1 0 p m
Monday	11th	..2 30 p m
Tuesday	12th	..5 0 a m
Wednesday	13th	..5 30 a m
Thursday	14th	..6 0 a m
Friday	15th	..6 0 a m
Saturday	16th	..6 30 a m
Monday	18th	..6 30 a m
Tuesday	19th	..7 30 a m
Wednesday	20th	..9 0 a m
Thursday	21st	..10 0 a m
Friday	22nd	..11 30 a m
Saturday	23rd	..1 0 p m
Monday	25th	..2 30 p m
Tuesday	26th	..5 0 a m
Wednesday	27th	..5 30 a m
Thursday	28th	..6 0 a m
Friday	29th	..6 30 a m
Saturday	30th	..6 30 a m

The Coaches will arrive at the West Bank Station in 2 hours after leaving Ulverston.  
**PLACES OF DEPARTURE:**  
 LANCASTER. . KING'S ARMS INN, AND BEAR AND STAFF INN.—ULVERSTON. . SUN INN, AND BRADYLL'S ARMS.  
**PROPRIETORS..... MESSRS. BLAYLOCK, BUTCHER, & Co.**  
 J. JACKSON, PRINTER, MARKET-PLACE, ULVERSTON.

# GUIDES



*Turner – Lancaster Sands c1825 (Tate Gallery)*

<http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/turner-lancaster-sands-tw0422>

- One guide used to say that no-one got lost on the sands – one or two might get drowned, but they were generally found again when the tide went out.
- The Guide was on a conspicuous white horse. He marked out the safest route with branches, or 'brobs' of laurel stuck at regular intervals in the sand – when he had done this he would sound his horn to let travellers know it was safe to cross.
- You could only cross with the right tides – basically 2-3 hours before low water, until about the same time before the next high water – about 5 hours altogether. But this was dependant on what sort of tide it was (spring / neap) and the weather. The rising tide moves for about 5 hours, and takes 7 to subside.
- In good weather, with good tides, it appears to have been very pleasant. In bad weather – it must have been awful and quite frightening. Nice sunshine, views and firm sand – compared with no visible route, fog, mist or the dark, with no knowing how deep the next ford was going to be.
- The Guide would sometimes also carry people through the fords on his horse.

- The post was possibly instituted in reign of King John (1199-1216) although there are no actual records supporting this. There may have been guides before this, no-one knows.
- Salary of £30-a-year, a freehold farm, gifts from passengers.
- Came into prominence with the priories at Cartmel & Conishead.
- There were petitions to the King, by the priors of Cartmel from Edward I onwards (1272-1307) to provide funds for a guide.
- Edward II (1326) held an inquiry into appointing a guide after a petition from the abbot at Furness. Outcome not known, but a post of Coroner was established to oversee those lost on the sands (the nearest coroner, who looked into deaths by violence, accident or foul play “dwelt in distant parts”).
- 1501 – Edmondson had a tenement and 10 acres of land and held the title of “Carter upon Kent Sands”.
- “The Carter” may have been adopted as a title as the guide had a cart at the ford – and the name seemed to have then become adopted as the family name.
- Following the dissolution, the guides post continued under the Duchy of Lancaster.
- 1548 – John Hartley, 10 marks per annum for Conishead, Thomas Hogeson £5 plus Carter House and three closes of land. Unfortunately he gained a reputation for being a gambling drunkard and travellers drowned in his care. The amount paid remained unchanged for over a century.
- 1715 – John Carter petitioned, and got, a wage increase to £12 – he was allowed to sell ale excise free to help support him.
- 1820 – salary now £32 a year.

The Guides were essential – for instance Major Bigland of Bigland Hall when crossing from Lancaster on a dusky evening, missed the Cartmel promontory altogether and came ashore near Conishead Priory.

# REFERENCES

*(other than the links provided within the text)*



**David Cox – On Lancaster Sands, Sunset – 1835**

<http://the-athenaeum.org/art/full.php?ID=51866>

The links within the text take you to copies of the original books – often digitised or scanned on Google Books. They are all well worth a read.

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- [Paul Hindle's Roads & Tracks of the Lake District – page 115 onwards](#)



*Lancaster Sands, Morecambe Bay, Shrimping - James Baker Pyne, 1864*

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/arts/yourpaintings/paintings/lancaster-sands-morecambe-bay-shrimping-58524>

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