

Walk 1

Walk length: 7.6km (4.75miles), total climb 190m (620')

An enjoyable walk; the first part up to Three Chimneys is strenuous, the rest is moderate/easy; it can be muddy in parts, so suitable footwear is recommended.

Turn right (east) out of Strines station (3) and climb up the rough, unmade track. At the top you will come out next to The Fox pub in the tiny village of Brook Bottom. Turn left, past the pub and follow the road through the village. It starts to climb and becomes a track. After approx. 200m follow a footpath sign pointing right, through a gate and take the path up the field keeping close to the fence on your left. (You will continue climbing now until you reach Three Chimneys). Turn left through a gate after a wooden farm building and follow the path diagonally to the right as it becomes rocky and climbs steeply. It is a well-defined footpath and curves right until you join a wall on your right. The path climbs approx. 120m to a gate with a stile alongside. Over the stile continue straight up between a fence and a wall to another stile. Cross this stile and join a tarmac track up to Higher Capstone Farm. Follow the helpful sign 'Foot Path', still climbing until you come out on to a track. Turn left and the next building you come to, on your left, is Three Chimneys (1). Stand just beyond Three Chimneys and look west. To quote from the book:

'It was hilly country. Down below they could see the line of the railway, and the black yawning mouth of a tunnel. The station was out of site. There was a great bridge with tall arches running across one end of the valley.'

There were many fewer trees in Edith Nesbit's day but on a cold, clear winter's day, when the trees are free of leaves, it is possible to see the railway and the mouth of Marple South Tunnel (look NW). Marple Goyt Cliff Viaduct (1km left of the tunnel) is now hidden by conifers and Strines station is, as Edith Nesbit rightly says, out of sight behind a high ridge.

After Three Chimneys continue along the track. To the right is a quarry and worth a short detour to see Mellor Cross, first erected in 1970. John Wesley, the great Methodist preacher of 18th Century, preached from here and described the view as 'Paradise'. This explains the name of the next building, which is approximately 200m along the path from Three Chimneys. It is on the right of the track and its name is Paradise (2). It was here that Saretta Deakin, half-sister of Edith Nesbit, lived with her husband John. Edith often came to stay with Saretta and became well known for walking widely in the Strines, New Mills and Marple areas. With her bobbed hair, long skirts and walking 'uncorsetted' she cut an unconventional figure in the district. She set a number of her early books and stories in the New Mills and Strines areas, with many place names barely disguised, eg Old Mills, Firth Vale, Aspinshaw Hall etc.

Retrace your steps to the crossroads by Paradise Farm and turn right down the hill. Keep following the surfaced route as far as the bridleway below Lily Bank Farm. Turn right and after approx. 50m there is a bridleway heading downhill on the left. Go down this bridleway until you reach a junction with another bridleway. Turn left and follow this for about 500m until you come to a bridge over a stream by Greenclough Farm. Just before the bridge take the track off to the right. This runs parallel to the railway and is the main bridleway from Strines to Marple. Follow the path through a tunnel under the railway (admire the stone mason's art) until you start to walk beside the river Goyt. You will pass a weir next to Marple Goyt Cliff Viaduct (5). This is the '.....great bridge with tall arches running across one end of the valley', once visible from Three Chimneys. Admire again the stonemason's craft.

Walk 2

From Strines station (3) turn left (west) down the cobbled ramp and continue along Station Road, past Bruce's Clock, across the river until you arrive at Strines Road. Cross Strines Road and continue directly opposite, up Turf Lea Road, (a wide track), past the delightful Peere's Cottage until you reach the canal. Just before the track passes under the canal turn to the right and proceed up the steps on to the canal towpath. Stop at the top of the steps and look to your left back along the canal. On the far side of the canal is the site of Strines Wharf (6) where coal was transhipped from canal boats into horse-drawn carts to be taken to the calico print works in Strines. A timber stump is visible and it is believed that this was the base of a crane used to get coal off the canal boats. Children off one of the canal boats threw coal at the Railway Children to stop them fishing in 'their' canal. Later (in the book) the Children spotted a fire on a boat, saved a baby and a dog from the fire alerted Bill the Bargeman and became heroes. They were rewarded by being taken later on a boat trip down the sixteen Marple lock flight and across the aqueduct.

Continue along the towpath (going north) towards Marple for just over a mile. Along this stretch of towpath look regularly to the right and admire the view. Across the other side of the valley and near the top of the hill you can see a white house (1). This is Three Chimneys, next door to where Edith Nesbit used to stay regularly with her sister. We believe this house is the inspiration for 'Three Chimneys', the house, in the book, film and play where the children come to live.

When you arrive at the only brick bridge on the canal (the rest are built from stone) you have the choice of alternative routes:

Continue beside the river, past Roman Lakes, once a pleasure park popular with people from Manchester who came for the day by their hundreds. Bear left when you meet a track coming in from the right. You then pass the site of Samuel Oldknow's six storey mill, (being extensively excavated – worth a detour), cross Bottom's Bridge over the Goyt and start to climb up Lakes Road. To your left is the bottom of a flight of steps that leads up to a footbridge across the railway from which one can view the site of the 1893 landslip (7) (see Walk 2). Continue up Lakes Road until you come to Beechwood (10), now flats but formerly the home of Edward Ross. He was Company Secretary of the Manchester Sheffield and Lincolnshire Railway, who built and ran the line. He was well known in Marple for his philanthropic good works, particularly helping the poor in times of need. He also helped young men to get jobs on the railway. He was a distinguished local resident but one with a social conscience. Edith Nesbit would have known Edward Ross and we believe he is the inspiration for the character of 'the Old Gentleman' in The Railway Children.

Beechwood (10) was built for Edward Ross by the railway company and sits right on top of Marple South Tunnel (4), '..... the black, yawning mouth of a tunnel'. It is unfortunately not possible to get a view of the tunnel entrance which sits behind a large retaining wall.

Continue on up Faywood Drive until you come to a junction. Turn right on to Arkwright Road and walk until you reach the main Brabyns Brow. Cross over, turn right and continue down to Marple station.

Or you can walk up Brabyns Brow to the canal and follow Walk 2 in reverse to take you back to Strines station.

Walk 2a via the site of the 1893 Landslip:

Walk length: 4.3km (2.5 miles), total climb 101m (340')

After going under Brick Bridge but before going back over the bridge, take the footpath to the left down to Strines Road. Cross over and directly opposite is a footpath running down, alongside a hedge which leads towards the railway (path can be muddy). After a sharp left you will arrive at the top of some steps leading down to Arkwrights Bridge, a footbridge that took apprentices from Samuel Oldknow's mill in the valley up to All Saints Church high above the valley. Look north from the footbridge and you will be looking at the site of the major 1893 landslip (7), which Edith Nesbit would have known about and will have been the inspiration for the landslip adventure in the book.

Continue across the bridge and down the steps. Note the special retaining wall built after the landslip, which has done its job well for the last 130 years. At the bottom of the steps turn left up Lakes Road. Near the top you will arrive at 'Beechwood' (10), now flats but originally the home of Edward Ross. Edward Ross was Company Secretary, a position just below the board of directors, of the Manchester Sheffield & Lincolnshire Railway who built the original line. He gave food and fuel to the poor, particularly at Christmas. He helped many young men in the area to find employment on the railway. He lived for 40 years at Beechwood coinciding with the period when Edith stayed frequently with her sister next door to Three Chimneys. Edith was a great walker over the whole area and would have known Edward Ross, his social conscience appealing to her socialist views.

Continue up this road until Arkwright Road is reached. Turn right and continue until you arrive at the steep Brabyns Brow. Cross over and continue down to Marple station.

Or turn up Brabyns Brow to the canal and join Walk 2b down Marple locks to the aqueduct and back.

Walk 2b via the full Marple flight of 16 locks and on to Marple Aqueduct:

Walk length: 4.5km (2.7miles), total climb 81m (270')

At Brick Bridge continue over the bridge (called a 'roving bridge') as the towpath changes to the other side and follow the towpath to top lock. This is also the junction between the Peak Forest Canal (which you will follow) and the later Macclesfield Canal which goes off to the left. Cross the Macclesfield by the bridge and note that top lock is Lock 16 (8). Walk down Lockside, which follows the flight of locks, through the horse tunnel under Strines Road. The locks here come thick and fast. Marple Memorial Park is on your left and on your right after Lock 10 is the lovely Oldknow's Warehouse, now converted to offices. This building was designed so that canal boats could off-load their cargoes of cotton under cover. Cross Brabyns Brow into a minor road (Aqueduct Road) and follow the route of the tramway which preceded the locks in late 18th Century. This roughly follows the canal and eventually you will reach a bridge just below Lock 1. Do not cross the bridge but join the towpath and this will lead you on to Marple Aqueduct (9). It opened in 1800 after seven years in the building and was considered an engineering wonder. The aqueduct is 94m (309') long and consists of three arches, with the central arch rising 30m (100') above the River Goyt. Note also the later railway viaduct running parallel to, but higher than, the aqueduct.

After viewing the aqueduct return via the canal towpath, alongside the canal to reach, once again, the top of Brabyns Brow. Turn left and proceed down to Marple station.

Strines is really the home of The Railway Children

Many believe that the inspiration for The Railway Children came from Strines, a village in Stockport Borough, between Marple and New Mills.

The author, Edith Nesbit, had a sister, Saretta, who lived high above Strines at a house called 'Paradise'. Edith stayed with Saretta often and got to know the area and its people well. Next door to Paradise is a house called 'Three Chimneys', both still there today. In The Railway Children she writes, **'It was hilly country. Down below was the line of the railway, and the black yawning mouth of a tunnel. There was a great bridge with tall arches across the valley'**. All were visible from Three Chimneys.

In the book the children have adventures on the canal with its coal wharf, the flight of 16 locks and the aqueduct, all still there. In 1893 there was a major landslip on the railway near Strines, surely the inspiration for the famous landslip adventure.



Three Chimneys



Edith Nesbit

'The Railway Children book has never been out of print since it was first published in 1906. It has been made into two major films, four television series, a film sequel and now a play'

The final piece of the jigsaw pointing to Strines and Marple as the inspiration for The Railway Children is the 'Old Gentleman'. Edward Ross, a senior railway company manager, lived at Beechwood, above Marple South Tunnel and visible from Three Chimneys. Edith Nesbit would have known Edward Ross. He was well known for helping the poor in times of need and for helping young men find jobs with the railway company. He was a distinguished local resident with social conscience. The parallels with the kind and generous Old Gentleman of the book are clear.

The walks leaflet pinpoints the ten places in the Strines and Marple areas that are linked with Edith Nesbit and The Railway Children.

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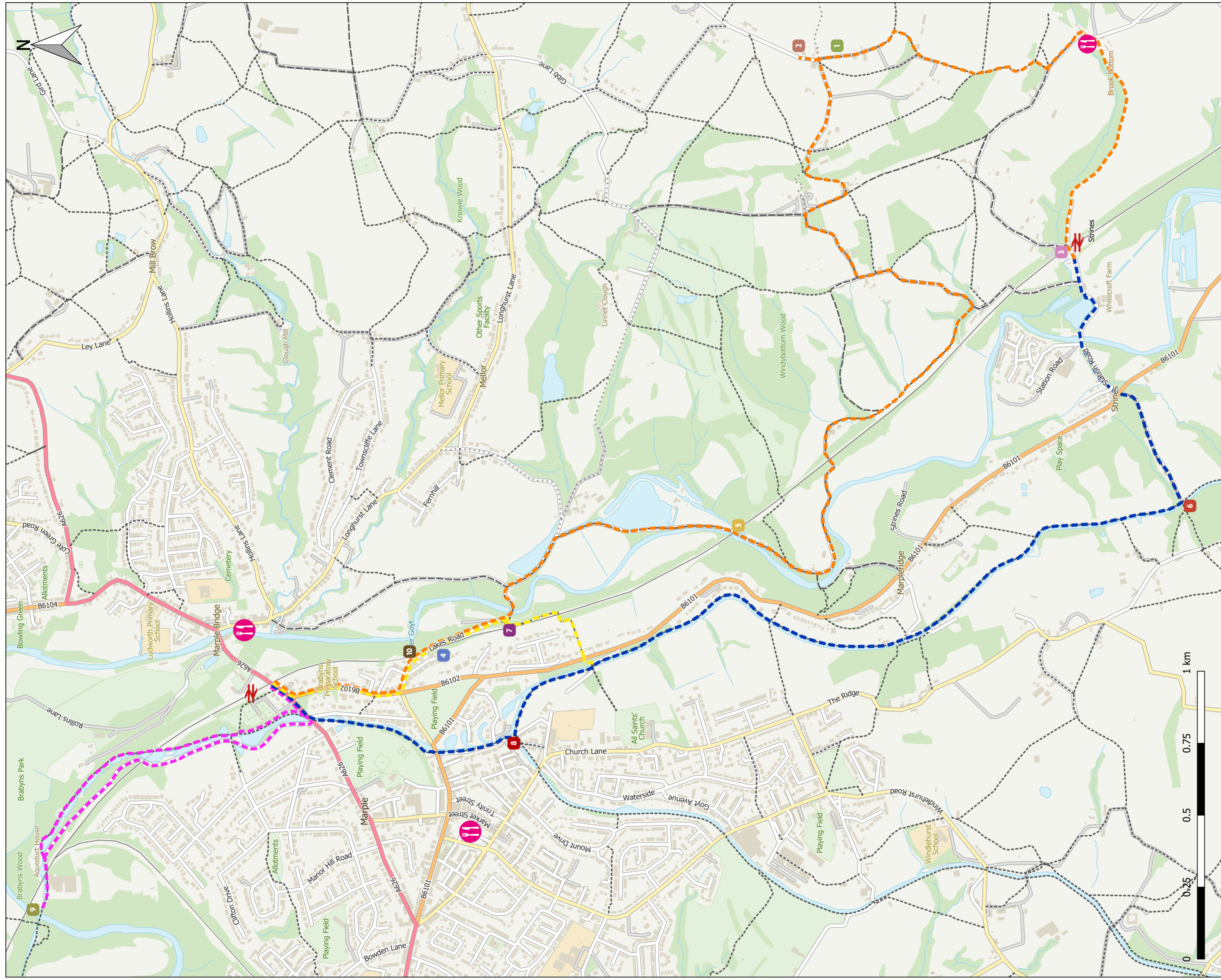
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STRINES: HOME OF THE RAILWAY CHILDREN

Two walks that explore The Railway Children links with Strines and Marple





Ten locations in Strines and Marple associated with The Railway Children

- 1** Three Chimneys: where mother and the children moved after father was 'taken away'.
- 2** Paradise: where author Edith Nesbit's half-sister Saretta lived until 1893. Edith often stayed with Saretta.
- 3** Strines station: displayed on the platform, the hand drawn plan of the now-demolished station buildings shows the various rooms at the station and also the siding where wagons with domestic coal were shunted, which Peter was once found stealing.
- 4** Marple South Tunnel: 'the gaping mouth of a tunnel' which is still visible from Three Chimneys when the trees are free of leaves.
- 5** Marple Goyt Cliff Viaduct: 'there was a great bridge with tall arches running across one end of the valley', a viaduct visible from Three Chimneys, again when the trees are free of leaves.

- 6** Strines Wharf: where coal was off-loaded for Strines Printworks and where the children save a dog and baby from a burning narrow boat.
- 7** Site of 1893 major landslip: just south of Marple South Tunnel.
- 8** Top of Marple flight of 16 canal locks: Edith says 19 locks in the book but authors do sometimes make mistakes.
- 9** Marple Aqueduct: the doctor takes Roberta to see the aqueduct and later in the book Bill the Bargeman takes the children down the locks and across the aqueduct. 'It was ripping mother' says Peter.
- 10** Beechwood: the home of Edward Ross aka 'the Old Gentleman'. Can be seen from Three Chimneys.

- Walk 1
- Walk 2
- Walk 2A
- Walk 2B
- Places to Eat/Drink
- Bridleway
- Byway Open to All Traffic (BOAT)
- Footpath