

NORTH WEST COAST FROM THE AIR

Ronny Mitchell

The coast of North West England has seen great changes over the centuries. Up to the late Middle Ages it was populated by small agricultural and fishing communities and, apart from the border raids of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, life was generally uneventful. But from the middle of the eighteenth century, rich coal and iron ore deposits were being discovered and exploited.

The peaceful coastal life changed to one of rapid industrial expansion with a growing population to work it. This continued until the 1950s when heavy industry, no longer vital for wartime survival, quickly declined. Ironworks, coal pits and railway sidings which had sprung up during the previous two centuries were demolished and the land cleared. Coastal villages and harbours once alive with commercial shipping, coal wharves and fish quays were now looking for a new life. The leisure industry was quick to respond and take over the role of major employer.

North West Coast from the Air takes its readers on a flight from Blackpool to Carlisle following this changed coastline. Although most of the great industrial heritage of the North West has gone, the beautiful and interesting coastline remains with many outstanding features. These are captured in fascinating detail in Ronny Mitchell's superb aerial photographs, in this successor volume to the author's hugely successful *Lakeland and Cumbria from the Air*.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

After war service with the RAF, Ronny Mitchell took a degree in geography followed by a Diploma in Surveying. He then spent five years carrying out ground control for aerial mapping in Jordan, Iraq and the Antarctic. After leaving the survey company he joined BEA (later British Airways) as a pilot, retiring as a training captain on their Trident fleet. After retirement he purchased a Cessna 150 and spent many years photographing the north of England especially Cumbria from the air. His main interests now are medieval churches, gardening and walking with his dogs.

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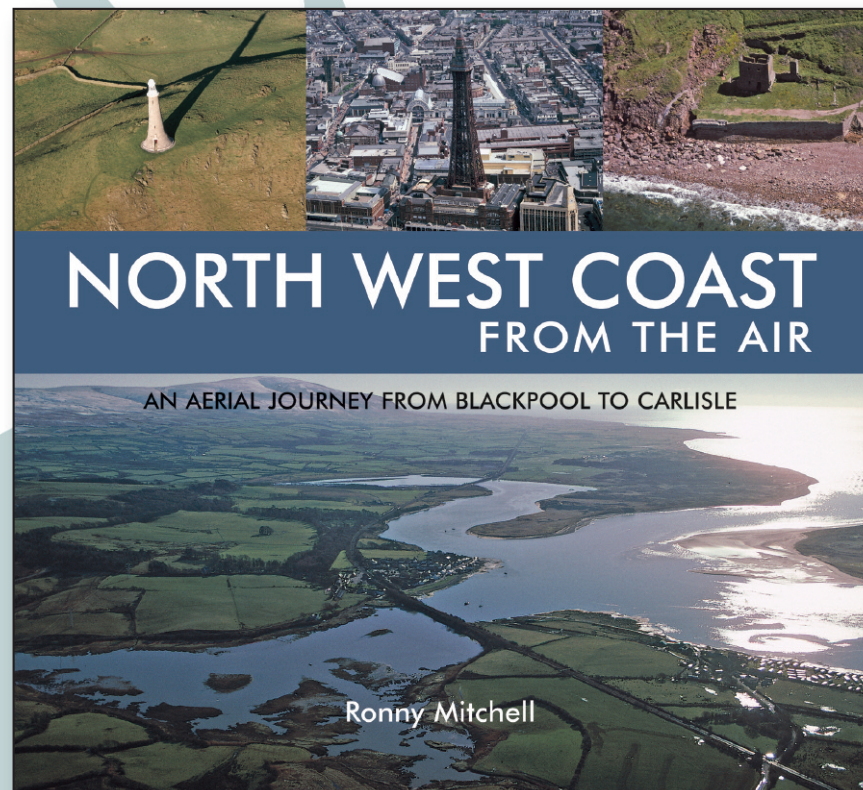
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Left: The Ulverston Canal.

Right: We are looking from North Head across Saltom Bay to Whitehaven and Workington with the hills of Dumfriesshire on the horizon. The Cumbria Coastal Way follows the cliff edge.

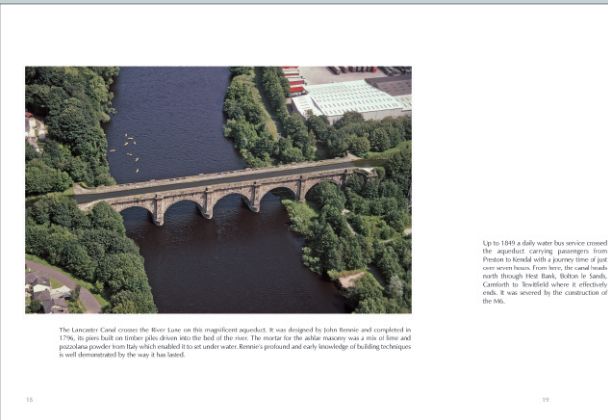


Far right: Like many of the great houses of Cumbria, Sizergh Castle started life as a pele tower in the fourteenth century for defence against the Scots raiders. It was much added to and altered in Elizabethan times and later and contains notable woodwork and furniture.



Lower right: The waters of the River Mite come from Wastwater, claimed to be the cleanest and purest of all the lakes in the Lake District and for that reason is called upon to provide the supply for the nuclear site at Sellafield. Here is the River Mite on the left as it goes under the railway bridge to join the Rivers Esk and Irt.

A major deposit of rich haematite ore was discovered in 1856 at Hodbarrow below the eastern end of what is now the outer barrier.



The Lancaster Canal crosses the River Lune on this magnificent aqueduct. It was designed by John Rennie and completed in 1796. Its piers built on timber piles driven into the bed of the river. The mortar for the ashlar masonry was a mix of lime and gunpowder from Italy which enabled it to set under water. Rennie's profound and early knowledge of building techniques is well demonstrated by the way it has lasted.

Up to 1840 a daily water bus service crossed the aqueduct, carrying passengers from Preston to Kendal with a journey time of just one week! From here, the canal heads north through Fleet Bank, Bolton to Leeds, Carlisle to Newcastle where it effectively ends. It was shared by the construction of the 19th.

