

The Leven Valley

Find the valley on an OS map at grid reference SD355845

Visiting the sites Only Stott Park Bobbin Mill and the Haverthwaite Railway are operational and open to the public. The other sites can be viewed from nearby paths and roads.

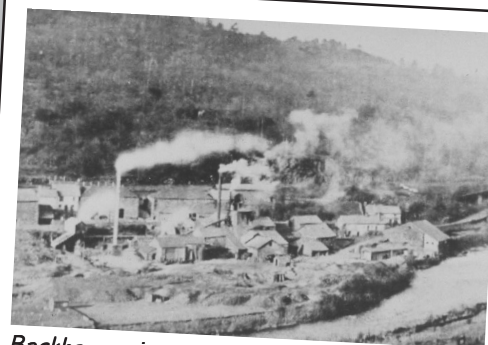
Recipe for Industrial Success

1. Select one valley offering natural transport routes, which also connect with the wider world's trade routes.
2. Ensure there is easy access to rich supplies of minerals such as iron.
3. Add in a plentiful supply of fast flowing water, like the river Leven running from the southern end of Windermere. This guarantees an essential power supply and provides water for manufacturing processes.
4. Mix together with extensive deciduous woodland, suitable for coppicing to provide wood for manufacturing, construction and fuel in the form of charcoal.
5. Sprinkle in a tradition of rural craftsmanship, a local supply of labour, and entrepreneurs with vision and money to invest.
6. Combine and allow the industries to complement one another. Leave to develop over time, adding in new ingredients such as rail transport when available. Remember to cream off the profits at frequent intervals!

Backbarrow Ironworks, 1711-1967

Backbarrow was one of the earliest blast furnaces established in the north of England and the most successful of its kind in the Lake District. Iron ore from Low Furness was burnt with charcoal to create pig iron (crude iron bars). This was used to produce cannons, cannon balls, anchors, plough blades, spades, hoes and household items like firebacks.

Did you know? The furnace had to be fed with iron ore and charcoal, day and night, for months on end.



Backbarrow ironworks in the 1920s

Low Wood Gunpowder Works, 1798-1935

The gunpowder produced at Low Wood was used for local mining and quarrying. Gunpowder from the Lake District supplied the whole country including the Army and Navy. The gunpowder was also traded through the port of Liverpool, mainly to Africa where it was exchanged for slaves.

Did you know?

Accidents were frequent. Cart horses had copper or brass shoes to prevent sparks which could cause an explosion.

Workers' cottages

The terraced housing at High Row, Backbarrow, was built in the late 1700s to house the growing industrial workforce in the valley.

Did you know?

Most houses built in the eighteenth century had no indoor toilets.

Stott Park Bobbin Mill, 1835-1971

This mill once produced 250,000 bobbins a week for the cotton industry. Many of the cotton industries were in Lancashire but some were further afield. Approximately 250 men and boys worked here throughout the mill's history. Some of the boys were orphans who came from workhouses. The mill is now a working museum run by English Heritage.

Did you know?

All the bark had to be peeled off the wood before it could be made into bobbins. This work was often done by orphan children who received no pay or education.

Haverthwaite Railway, 1869-1960s

This railway formed a vital transport link for the Leven Valley, transporting freight and passengers from Lakeside to Ulverston, Barrow and Lancashire. The railway is still used for tourist trips to Lakeside today.

Did you know?

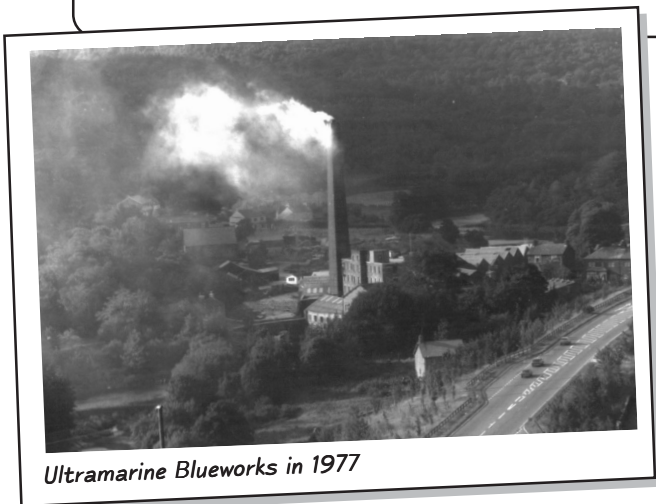
The steam locomotive Furness Railway No. 20 was built in 1863 and is still working today.

Ultramarine Blue Works, 1895-1981

Blue dyes and pigments used in paint and bleach were made here, as were the ingredients to whiten washing. Some of the ingredients – sulphur, soda ash, china clay, pitch and silica – came from as far away as Texas. Before the blue works, the site was home to corn, paper and cotton mills, which employed orphans from Liverpool, London and Brighton. There is now a hotel on the site.

Did you know?

In later years, workers from Ulverston had their own special bus service because they were so covered in blue!



Glossary

Blast furnace – a furnace used for smelting iron: iron ore and charcoal are supplied at the top and air is blown in at the bottom to create high temperatures

Coppicing – cutting young tree stems to quicken and encourage growth

Workhouse – a centre where very poor people were forced to live and work for their keep

**You could also investigate the history of
Eskdale Valley & Duddon Valley**