

## Great Central Railway trackbed description

### Woodford Halse to Rugby - part 2 of 6

This document describes the route of the Great Central Railway from the northern portal of the Catesby Tunnel, northwards to the point where the A425 road is reached. Access was difficult for some sections of this route.

The Catesby Tunnel extends for around 2.7km. It is occupied by an organisation offering test facilities for cars, and is understood to be intact. The northern portal at SP 5245 5960 is blocked (Figure 1), and the railway trackbed proceeds north-north-west from here in a cutting, shown in Figure 2. At SP 5242 5967 the trackbed passes under a bridge which I think is used just for farm access.



Figure 1 Northern portal of the Catesby Tunnel (SP 5245 5960).





*Figure 2 Looking north along the trackbed just north of the Catesby Tunnel (SP 5245 5960).*

The surrounding land loses height as the railway proceeds northwards, and by SP 5235 5985 the trackbed is on an embankment. Although the line between Catesby Tunnel and this point is not marked on Ordnance Survey maps as a footpath, there were no signs to indicate prohibited access, and the ground is well-worn. However at SP 5235 5985 a gate blocked further progress north (Figure 3). I did not go beyond this gate, but it is clear that the trackbed is intact and continues along an embankment through farmland. At SP 5224 6020 the embankment reaches a short gap where there was once a bridge (Figure 4). At this point the Jurassic Way footpath passes through this gap east-west. North of this gap the embankment continues for around 250m, until the Catesby Viaduct is reached at SP 5215 6046. A general view of the viaduct is shown in Figure 5 and a view looking north along the trackbed from the blocked southern end of the viaduct is shown in Figure 6.





*Figure 3 Looking north along the GCR trackbed (SP 5235 5985).*



*Figure 4 View west where the Jurassic Way passes through the GCR embankment (SP 5224 6020).*





*Figure 5 Looking north-west towards the southern end of Catesby Viaduct from close to the embankment (camera at SP 5225 6036).*



*Figure 6 A view north towards the blocked southern end of the Catesby Viaduct (SP 5215 6046).*



The Catesby Viaduct crosses the River Leam in a small valley, reaching an embankment at SP 5211 6061. I didn't gain access to the trackbed at the northern end of Catesby Viaduct, although maps show a marked footpath on the eastern side of the subsequent cutting. The adjacent land rises so that the trackbed is in a deep cutting with a footbridge passing above at SP 5202 6088. There is evidence of clay shooting around here so I thought it better to not attempt to get down to the trackbed. A view from the footbridge is shown in Figure 7.



*Figure 7 Looking south at the GCR trackbed from the footpath overbridge (SP 5202 6088).*

From this point the trackbed continues north in a cutting towards the A425 road between Staverton and Lower Shuckburgh. Access was not possible between the bridge at SP 5202 6088 and the A425 crossing at SP 5190 6164. Judging by the Ordnance Survey map the land falls away towards a tributary of the River Leam (and the Northamptonshire/Warwickshire border) at SP 5192 6136, to the extent that the cutting becomes an embankment by SP 5195 6116. The trackbed crosses this tributary on the Staverton Viaduct (according to the map). It was not possible for me to see on the ground, or via online satellite images, if this viaduct is still in place or not. The embankment continued northwards after this viaduct for almost 300m, where the A425 road is reached.

At the A425 the railway would have crossed on an overbridge. This bridge has been removed, but there is evidence on both sides of the road of the supports, as shown in Figure 8.





*Figure 8 Looking north at the missing bridge where the GCR would have crossed the A425 west of Staverton (SP 5190 6164).*