

Arnside obsessed!

The small seaside village with it all, Arnside is no longer one of Cumbria's best kept secrets



The Promenade

PHOTO CUMBRIA TOURISM

There is something in the sea air in Arnside. It is palpable, a knowingness among those who live and work here. Like they are party to something the rest of us are not.

They have views – as sharp as a bell in the crisp winter air – of the Lakeland fells, snow-capped at this time of year. They have the coast with its intrigue of fast tides and shifting sand, as well as superb wildlife watching opportunities in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Not to mention spectacular sunsets. And behind the village are the delights of Silverdale's quiet country lanes,

'In Arnside, they really do seem to have it all. Increasingly, the rest of us are being attracted to the village too'

woods and field paths.

Tucked away in the furthest corner of south Cumbria, they have no concerns about accessibility either, just minutes from the M6 and with their own train station offering a direct service to Lancaster and Manchester Airport, and from there, well, the world.

Not that they need it with the range of independent shops, galleries, pubs and restaurants.

That feeling in the air is contentment. In Arnside, they really do seem to have it all.

Increasingly, the rest of us are being attracted to the village too and, in summer in particular, The Promenade is lined with cars, the water's edge busy, the path to Arnside Knott well worn by those seeking an easy hike that rewards with panoramic views across Morecambe Bay to the mountains, as well as wildflowers and butterflies supported by a mild climate.

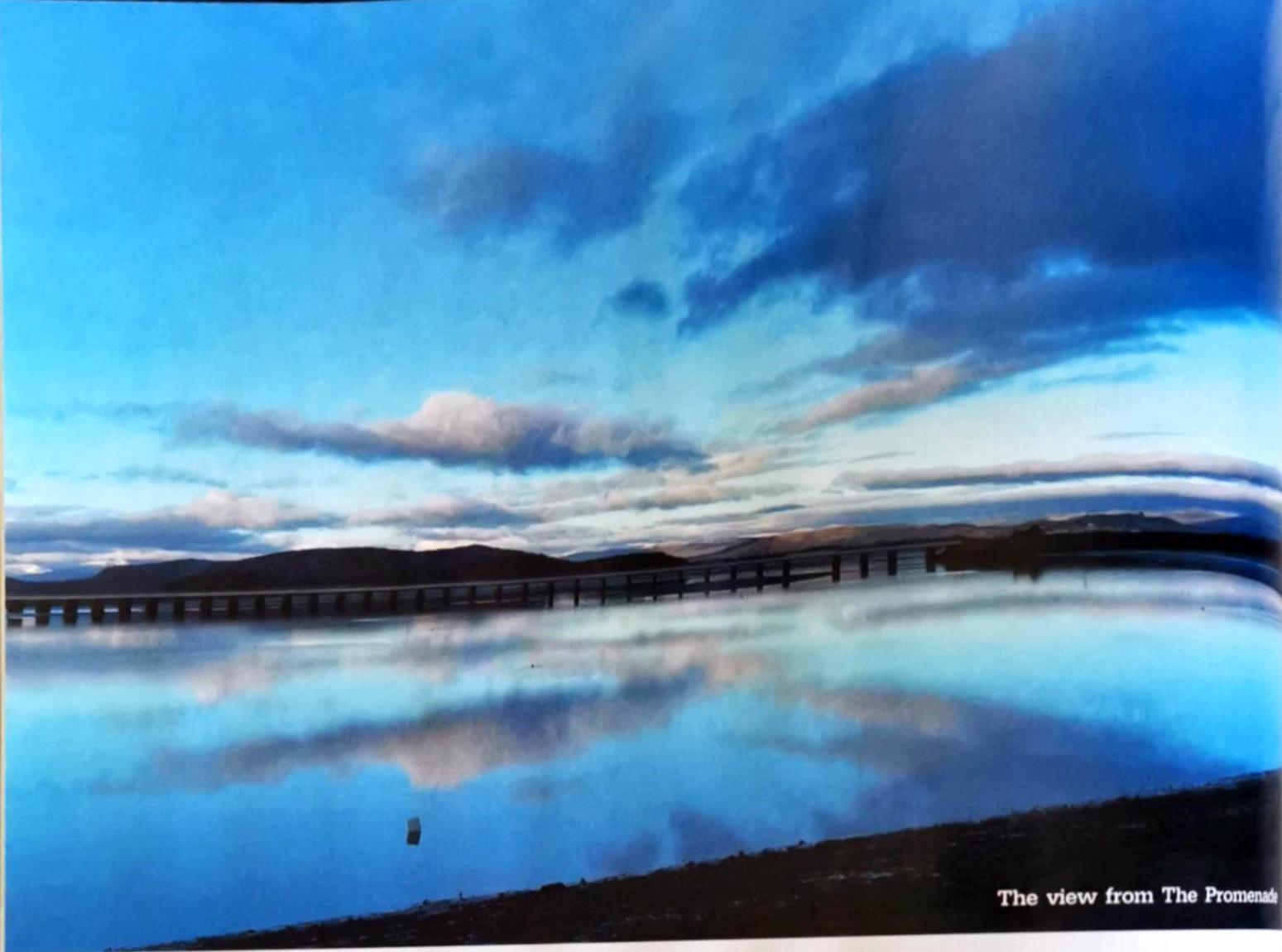
With its position on the estuary, Arnside

developed from a few farms and cottages to become a small fishing port. In 1841 just 140 people lived there.

It was the arrival of the Crossfield family's house building business that saw the village grow out from what is now The Promenade. They also built boats, in particular a type of in-shore fishing vessel known as a nobby, used for catching shrimp, for which Morecambe Bay was known from early Victorian times.

Later, it is believed that author Arthur Ransome's 'Swallow' was built in Arnside and was sailed on the estuary in the 1930s by a local teenager.

The arrival of the Barrow-Lancaster railway – the Furness line – that is carried over the River Kent estuary on a 505m long viaduct with 50 piers, impacted the most on Arnside. Built in 1857, the line brought wealthier Victorian holidaymakers who turned it into a mini resort. The pier was built in 1860, and the



The view from The Promenade

road to Sandside ten years later.

The railway line was rebuilt in 1915 to support the extra weight of the munition trains from Barrow. Similarly, the pier was rebuilt, first in 1934 but this was because it was destroyed in a storm; the same thing happened in 1983 and it was rebuilt and reopened a year later.

The oldest building is Arnside Tower, a 15th Century pele tower built as a defence to Scottish raiders.

Today, around 2,500 people live in Arnside. One of them, commercial photographer Victoria Sedgwick, came ten years ago after enrolling her eldest daughter Philippa as an international boarder at Dallam School. The family was living in Portugal at the time and had no connection with Cumbria.

It was by chance that Victoria came across Arnside and its pier. "It blew my mind," she says. "I just thought, I love it here, it has so much soul, I could live here." A year to the day, she moved to the village, initially renting then later buying her maisonette at the top of Silverdale Road.

She says: "It's fully home now, we are fully embedded and Arnside obsessed."

It was the water that had such a profound effect on her. "I have always been close to water and have realised now that I do have to be close to water. I also like the fact that the properties are different, there's no chance of having normality here, and that I can get on a

train to London easily when I need to. You still feel connected here.

"I didn't know a single person when I came and it took a while to be known, but I always found people to be friendly; it's an accepting place and very inclusive."

Victoria works long hours for a range of business clients, as well as doing family photography and covering events and exhibitions, and it is when she needs a break that Arnside really delivers. She explains: "I can walk down to The Albion for a sundowner, chat to a few people and walk back home knowing it's taken hardly any time out of my day but feeling really topped up."

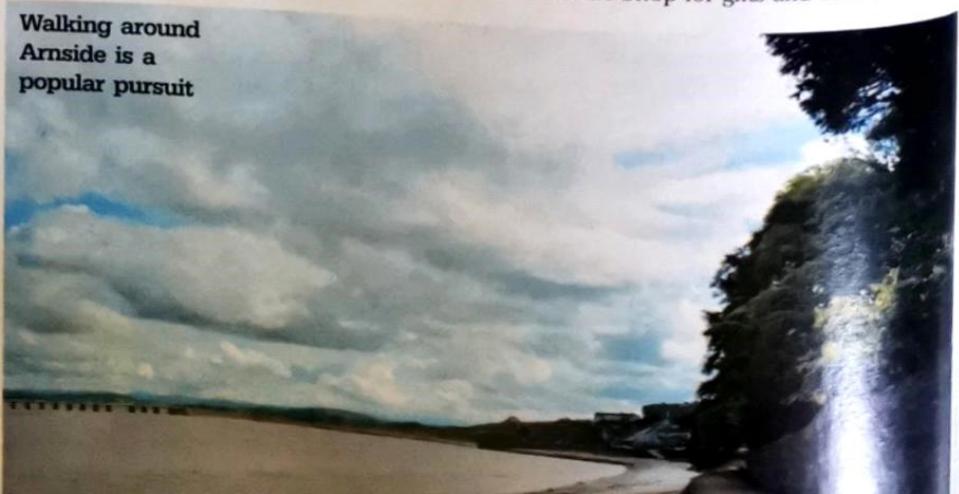
The Albion, together with Ye Olde Fighting

Cocks, bookend The Promenade. For a small village, it has no shortage of refreshment stops. They begin opposite the station at the Wayside Café (formerly the wonderful Moochin' About Jazz Café).

On to the seafront and there is the Wagtail Café and Deli which comes with an endorsement for its pies; the Old Bakehouse, with its regular queue; the Posh Sardine vintage tea room and gift shop (inside knowledge: it's an anagram of Arnside Shop); and Arnside Chippy Shop, which has become legendary for its Arnside Chippy app.

For a tiny high street, there are of plenty shops – all independent – to choose from too. The Little Shop for gifts and cards, Arnside

Walking around Arnside is a popular pursuit



House and The Coast Office gift shops, The Country Shop with menswear and womenswear ranges, and She Sells 'eco chic' boutique, which specialises in pre-loved designerwear.

Gallery H brings together an international collection of contemporary and traditional works of fine art, furniture, jewellery, glassware and silverware. Running at 90 degrees to The Promenade, visitors should not miss out Pier Lane Gallery, which is run for artists by artists Caren Threlfall and Peter Threlfall and photographer Trevor Brown.

In another partnership Lee Waddington restores furniture while his wife Leanne is an expert in upholstery, as well as sourcing new furniture and home accessories to sell in their showroom at Waddington Home Interiors.

The newest business in the village is Homeleigh Vintage, opened in September by Tracey Leigh, who relocated from Skipton where she ran a successful mid-century vintage furniture and fabrics business. With a background in interior design, she curates an impressive range of high-end gifts and homeware with brands like Nkuku, Garden Trading, Falcon enamelware, Crispin Finn's red, white and blue range, Wanderlust Paper Company and FAR candles, plus fabrics by G P & J Baker, Designers Guild and Schumacher.

"I wanted a change and loved the area having visited a couple of times," explains Tracey. "I viewed a property and as soon as I saw it I wanted it. Then when the shop over the road became available as well I thought it would be ideal for my business."

"When I moved I didn't know anyone but the people are lovely, really friendly and have been helpful and encouraging to me, giving me good compliments about the shop."

Continuing along past the end of The Promenade, a favourite stop is Arnside Beach Hut. It has been there since the 1950s but had been closed for nearly four years before the new owners took it on last summer and now offer a welcome coffee, tea or hot chocolate on a chilly day with a delicious cake, and ice cream in summer.

Nearby Ashmeadow House is being



The Albion, Arnside



Simon Whorrall, who led Arnside's coronavirus response

transformed into ten luxury apartments within a Grade II listed Georgian villa and 2.5 acres of private gardens overlooking the shoreline with spectacular views.

It was during the first lockdown that Arnside really came together as a community. In less than a day, more than 400 people answered a COVID-19 call for help after an appeal was issued on social media by IT consultant Simon Whorrall. With him at the helm, the volunteers took over the Sailing Club as their headquarters to organise primary services, with some working 13-hour days, seven days a week, without a day off in months as the impact of the pandemic took

hold.

With many elderly residents having no relatives nearby, the group organised 60-70 deliveries a day of groceries, medications and hot meals on a Monday produced for free by the chef at The Albion and funded by the pub and EWGA. The Arnside Volunteering Group (AVG) mobilised 25 local teachers who formed the home education forum to help children and parents home-school, while other volunteers made thousands of items of PPE at home and in the Women's Institute.

Victoria, who contracted COVID-19 herself early in the pandemic, volunteered to record the incredible community effort in a series of photographs, 'action' shots of the voluntary work and doorstep pictures of families at home.

At the time Simon said: "People are rightly proud of their efforts and to be part of this community. We have managed to harness a wonderful sense of community spirit, with friendships that will last a lifetime, which we will be taking into the future."

Victoria adds: "It brought the community together in an incredible, supportive way. People who didn't talk to each other do now; everybody is part of Arnside."

victoriasedgwick.com; @homeleighvintage; ashmeadowhouse.co.uk



Volunteers at The Albion