

## IRLAM STATION SUBWAY

This arched structure marks the site of Irlam Station's first subway, which was built when Irlam's second station was constructed in 1893. The subway, then at the Glazebrook end of the station, would have connected the Liverpool and Manchester platforms. Prior to this, when the first station was built in 1873, the railway track was traversed via a footbridge.



Above: Irlam's 1st station 31st May 1889 with footbridge.



Above: The original Irlam Station subway unearthed during car park groundworks.



Above: The subway at Irlam would have been similar to Partington subway shown here.

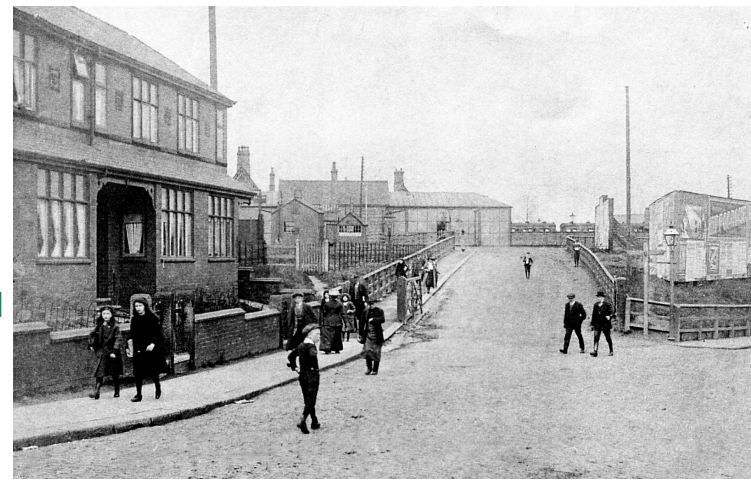
From 1893 commuters using Irlam railway station would have to enter and leave via the Cadishead approach road, which went directly onto the Liverpool platform. Passengers heading for the Manchester bound platform would continue to the end of the Liverpool platform, past the waiting room and ticket office, and descend steps to turn right into the narrow white tiled subway tunnel which went under the track. Steps at the other end alighted onto the Manchester platform.

In the early 1900's, when the Steelworks in Irlam was thriving, many workers came via train from Wigan. German prisoners of war (POW's) also provided a helping hand at the Steelworks, with around two hundred travelling by train each day from Leigh POW Camp. Imagine the crush and the noise as crowds of men filled the narrow subway tunnel from end to end.

It is believed that when the sirens went off during World War II (1939-1945) some residents from Bradburn Road in Irlam used the subway tunnel as an air raid shelter. Bombers targeting the cities of Liverpool or Manchester or maybe heavy industries, such as the Steelworks, could easily have used the line of the Manchester Ship Canal as a guide to their targets.

In 1957, when the Steelworks (then renamed Lancashire Steel Corporation) built their own rail connection to Irlam Station, a new subway was built and the old one filled in.

In 2015, as part of the restoration works to Irlam station and the surrounding environment, a new car park was introduced. During the groundworks the old subway was unearthed and a few of the white tiled bricks were saved and built into the arched seating structure in front of you, serving as a reminder of those earlier times.



Above: Cadishead approach road to Irlam Station c1895. The station house chimneys and rooftop can be seen in the background.

*As a boy in the 1950's myself and several friends used Irlam Station to catch a train to Urmston Baths. At that time Irlam Steelworks employed a lot of men who lived in the Wigan area and special trains were laid on to get them to and from work. Their morning train arrived a bit before ours at 8am and sometimes we met them in the subway, which at that time was at the Glazebrook end of the station. As the men surged through the noise from their clog irons was deafening. We would flatten ourselves against the white tiles of the walls and attempt to get through to the platform without getting our toes trodden on. We called them the beetle crushers! Most of them wore ex-army greycoats and carried ex-army knap sacks containing tea, sugar, milk, sandwiches and pies."*

Mike Kenwright

*"There was that many men from Wigan that worked at the Steelworks that got on the train. You couldn't work on the platform when they were in, you had to stand at the back else you might have been pushed on the track.*

*You never knew who was underneath the tunnel (subway). It was alright during the daytime, but at night time it wasn't very pleasant and I didn't want to go through it so I used to jump down from the platform and go over the lines and up onto the platform on the other side. I think that's how I got my bad legs!"*

Isabella Bates (Porter at Irlam Station)

QR code  
space

For more information on the history of Irlam and Cadishead, scan this QR code with a smart phone or tablet and this will direct you to the website.

A history of the Railways of Irlam and Cadishead is available on [www.irlamandcadishead.net](http://www.irlamandcadishead.net)