

## River Carron Weirs

In Central Scotland we have a much loved river called the Carron. Since early days it has served as a water supply, power source, nature resource, fish residence, suicide venue, invasion obstacle, swimming site, water transporter, sewage dump and shipping port.

It rises in the Denny Hills at Ordnance Survey Map Reference 64/623829, wends its way through valleys, and it, and its several tributaries, used to tumble over at least twenty two Weirs or Dams on its way to join the River Forth at Grangemouth. Many of these Weirs are long gone, though older hands may remember or know of some more, and if they do, we can add to the list.

This short and far from definitive treatise pinpoints some of them on the river and on its main tributaries. All are Ordnance Survey Map Reference identified, in case anyone wants to visit the sites.



Picture 1

Photo by Bill Jack 2010

The first Weir really is a Dam, and is the most magnificent - Carron Valley Reservoir (57/718837) built in 1938 and refurbished in 1986. This is the only obstruction with a known placarded date. Most of the others were built after 1700 AD, some possibly before. Many were built to serve the various mills like calico, flax, dye, corn and paper, probably in the 1800s. The picture shows the overflowing spillway and the now unused Water Turbine House. (*Picture 1*)

Further down from the Dam the Carron is joined by the Earls Burn which sports one Weir just west of Drum Farm (57/727844). This Weir is practically gone now but the outline of the lade from it can still be traced all the way down to Muirmill Farm. The pond at the north edge of the B818 is still barely visible though heavily overgrown. From the pond the water went under the B818 and the rest of the lade outline is better preserved right down to the Corn Mill at Muirmill Farm. The driving waterwheel is still present but its wooden paddles have rotted away. The threshing mill inside is also still there but is in a dilapidated condition. Thence the tailrace rejoins the Earls Burn just before it in turn joins the Carron. Originally it was thought there was a second Weir at Earlsburn House which was burned down in 1966, but it transpires the remaining structure on the burn was that of a bridge which connected the house with the ruined Ice House on other side of the burn.

Next we have the Langhill Weir Measurement Station (57/774846) which is relatively new, for the purpose of river Flow Measurement, and sports a fish movement facility.

Further down we come to Garvald Weir (57/785834) of which there is no trace but some ruined buildings nearby may have used it. This is just above a new pedestrian bridge which permits access to the north banks up and down stream of local beauty spot Carron Glen.

Downstream a little bit is the Fankerton Weir (57/792833) which is well preserved, and with a 3 metre drop. This was thought to be built about 1860 but could have been as early as 1825 and was used by the Carrongrove Paper Mill until 2008. Water was extracted by pipe, used in the papermaking process and also in earlier days, for powering a Water Turbine Generator in the mill.

Steps are at present being taken to bring a modern version of the turbine into use again, possibly along with a fish ladder. Salmon have recently been seen reaching the base of this Weir after they have negotiated the Lady's Leap and Linn.

The Carron now flows under the M80 Motorway and 50 yards downstream is a barely discernible very low Weir (57/804831) where only half remains. There are indications of a Lade now overgrown and partially covered by a modern housing scheme. This Weir serviced Denny Corn Mill now gone and is covered today by the same modern housing scheme.

Moving on down to the Herbertshire Park Weir (57/807831) today it is in a poor condition but was used to supply water to the now gone Vale Board Mill via a lade which ran under the A872 Denny Bridge, but it is now blocked off.

Just after the Vale Weir the Carron is joined by the Brewster Burn on which there were at least two Weirs (57/803827) in the area of Stripeside which were used by Custon Hall Dye works and others. You have to look hard to find any remains of these Weirs.

Downstream from where the Vale Mill used to be and just before the pedestrian bridge connecting Dunipace and Winchester Avenue Industrial Estate, the Carron was blocked by a Weir (57/812833) of which no trace remains today and its purpose is a mystery.

Below this same pedestrian bridge the Carron is joined by the Anchor Burn or Avon Burn where people used to swim in the Roslinn. Now believe it or not the Anchor Burn had no less than four Weirs. The first is near Craigend Farm (57/787877) where the bulk of the water is siphoned off to feed the Howietoun Fish Farm. The second is above the junction of the Leggat Burn at (57/806837) the remains still present, and from which a large bore pipe ran all the way down the middle of the burn to the third Weir at Allan Crescent (57/810834). The pipe until recently could still be seen in several places where the burn is low. From thence some of the water went by underground pipe to the Vale Mill. Lastly, just before entering the Carron the Anchor burn was dammed to take the Lade along to the Planting Corn Mill (57/812834). This dried up Lade and its discharge further down the Carron can still be seen though none of it is used nor has it been for at least 70 years.

The fifteenth Weir would appear to have been just before Headswood Mill (65/826826). The 1896 map shows this Weir and its short Lade to the pond and mill but there is little or no trace today of the Weir and the entrance to the Lade is barely visible where the present day vehicle depositary now sits.

Next downstream there was a Weir (65/832819), just opposite where the present sand quarry is. This supplied a mill, about where the greenhouses are now. Both the Weir and Lade are gone although part of the entrance still remains under the foliage.

A few hundred yards downstream the Carron proceeds under the M876 motorway. Just before, it passes the Carron's second best condition Weir at the Carron Flow Monitoring Station (65/833818). This Weir serves the purpose of damming the river to create a level backup, and refine the flow measurement. However some say by raising the water level by just over a metre, the flooding of the Denny road which is nearby and also under the motorway, is aggravated. It is relatively new probably built when the M876 motorway was made in the sixties.

A further  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile down is a lovely low nearly intact Weir at Rough mute (65/840816) with the Lade buttress shown, (*picture 2*) and the dried up Lade from this can still be seen running alongside the Larbert Road to service a little Mill now a ruin, further down the Carron.



**Picture 2**

**Photo by Bill Jack 2011**

Below this Weir the Carron's largest tributary - the River Bonny joins the Carron. It sports one probable tributary Weir and Mill at the Penn (65/825802) right in the centre of Bonnybridge just before entering the Bonny. A corn mill used this water now running through the Penn from up Greenhill area and/or St Helens Loch. The Mill was there before the canal and had a water wheel. Further up the Bonny just above the present road bridge the main stream provided a Weir (65815796) and long Lade to feed a Sawmill now long gone. There is no sign of the Weir but the path of the Lade is clearly visible between the Bonny and Canal.

Now we come to Larbert Weir (65/857820) which is badly breached. It is likely this dates back to when the original Carron Works was built and the Lade was the intake for the Carron Pond at the Works. The pond has now been drained to become a wild life site but the Lade runs under the Viaduct and Main Road, past South Broomage and still holds water, but goes nowhere.

The final Weir (65/879823) is also sadly breached and in disrepair. The Lade is long buried under the new Phoenix Works and with the Weir, is situated where the Grahamston Iron Works monument stands today, at the point where the tidal limit of the River Carron is.

From here on the Carron wends its eventful way uninterrupted to empty into the River Forth at Grangemouth.

**Bill Jack June 2012.**  
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