THE CUMBRIA COASTAL WAY

by
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About the Author

Ian and Krysia Brodie have worked together on several walking books including *Walking from Garstang* (now in its fourth edition). Their other walking guides include one to part of the Lancashire Coastal Path, the Cistercian Way, and other books covering the south Lakeland and Duddon areas. They frequently walk along the coast as well as amongst the fells and wider landscapes of northern England.

Ian Brodie is the former Director of Friends of the Lake District where he has been involved in landscape and amenity campaign work for over a decade. Ian and Krysia are active workers in the access and rights of way movement.

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Advice to Readers

Readers are advised that while every effort is taken by the author to ensure the accuracy of this guidebook, changes can occur which may affect the contents. It is advisable to check locally on transport, accommodation, shops, etc, but even rights of way can be altered. Paths can be affected by forestry work, landslip or changes of ownership.

The author would welcome information on any updates and changes sent through the publishers.

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INTRODUCTION

A coastline can be compared to a string of pearls where there is a continual dynamic interplay between land and sea, between coastal destruction and creation, between erosion and deposition, and between the frequently conflicting demands of people and nature. Nowhere is this more evident than on the Cumbrian coast. From Morecambe Bay to the Solway – two of England's great estuaries – this coastline has been shaped by the interaction of nature and economy; yet it retains much elemental beauty.

Edwin Waugh, writing in 1861 in *Seaside, Lakes and Mountains of Cumbria*, said:

Of all the English lake scenery no part lies less well known than that which skirts the sea, from the ruins of Peel in Furness to Whitehaven in Cumberland: and there is none which deserves less neglect. Shut out on the east by England's wildest mountains and on the west by the Irish Channel... this tract of country possesses interesting relics of every race which has left its name in our history.

Waugh's comments are as valid today as in the 19th century.

The Cumbria Coastal Way route was officially opened in the early 1990s. The concept of a link with other regional coastal paths to create a North West Coastal Trail from Chester to Carlisle (or, put another way, virtually from Wales to Scotland) is under active consideration, along with the possibility for increased coastal access.

The Cumbria Coastal Way is 298km/182 miles long and is not aimed specifically at the long-distance walker, although it can be accomplished as a single journey of 10–14 days. The walk is suitable for all abilities and can be undertaken in day or weekend sections. Much of the routefinding is easy but, that said, some sections need care underfoot and careful planning where the tides may affect the route. The route rarely climbs higher than 100m above sea level and has been designed to link with public transport. Because of the prevailing winds the route is described from south to north, and whilst May to October is a good season for walking the Cumbria Coastal Way can be enjoyed at any time of year.

Normal walking equipment is advised but there are some sections, such as those along the beach, where less strong footwear may be appropriate. The book describes the walks in sections; Appendix I has contacts for Tourist Information Centres where details of accommodation and services can be found.

The Cumbria Coastal Way caters for young and old, ramblers and amblers, loners and groups, photographers, historians, industrial archaeologists, wildlife watchers and conservationists. It appeals to local residents and to visitors alike. The views towards the Lake District fells, to the Isle of Man and to the hills of Scotland add extra interest.

THE WALK

The walk is described in five main sections:

Section I – Morecambe Bay

This is a major gem of the northwest coastline in terms of history, natural history and scenery. There are superb backdrops of the fells of the Lake District and Forest of Bowland. The bay is ringed with nature conservation sites of European and national importance, and these are linked with nationally designated landscape (Arnside–Silverdale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) and imposing houses and gardens at Levens Hall and Holker Hall.

Section II – The Duddon Estuary

The route encircles one of England's most secret estuaries. It passes through the market town of Broughton-in-Furness and then Millom, home and birthplace of the celebrated poet Norman Nicholson. The estuary is overshadowed by – as is most of the southern part of the route – the great mound of Black Combe. An ascent of this peak for its extensive views is easily achieved from the Coastal Way.

Looking towards Arnside Point from Silverdale (Stage 1)

Looking into Lower Eskdale from the bridge over the Esk (Stage 6)

Section III – The Lake District Coast

This quiet coast forms the southwestern fringes of the Lake District National Park and is noted for its wildlife and prehistoric sites. Inland lie the dales and fells whose waters gather to enter the sea via the triple estuary at Ravenglass, from where Romans once supplied their legions. Waters from England's highest fells and deepest lake emerge on this coast. The narrow gauge steam railway winds its way up into Eskdale. The house and gardens at Muncaster Castle are justly renowned.

Section IV – The West Cumbria Coast

From Seascale to Maryport green spaces intermingle with industrial towns and complexes whose history frequently placed them at the heart of the development of industrial technology. The historic towns of Whitehaven, Workington and Maryport all possess some superb architecture and are close to sites, such as St Bees Heads, where nature is profligate. Along this stretch of the walk the striking interface of economic development and natural beauty is at its most dynamic.

St Bees Heads looking north (Stage 9)

Section V – The Solway Estuary

North of Maryport you enter a wild landscape with the Scottish hills enticingly close across the most spectacular of estuaries. This is an area of big and imposing skies and plentiful wildlife; walking here is a privilege, and the locals rejoice in their special landscape. Steeped in history and literary associations it is still sufficiently secretive to warrant reverent attention. Carlisle is both the gateway to Scotland and a place worth visiting in its own right.

Grune Point – the wartime lookout point and memorial (Stage 13)

Sea campion

FLOWERS AND WILDLIFE

Many differing habitats are encountered along the coast, each with special types of plant and animals. Wildlife is evident in varying degrees, depending on the season, the state of the tides, and how inconspicuous you are; patience is often well rewarded. The coastal path links a string of designated nature reserves: European Special Areas of Conservation sites (SAC), Ramsar sites (internationally important wetlands), Special Protection Areas (SPA) for birds, National Nature Reserves (NNR), Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and county wildlife sites. The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), Cumbria Wildlife Trust (CWT), the National Trust (NT) and Natural England (NE) are significant coastal nature reserve landholders.

Sea pinks

Glasswort

Rockrose

To undertake all or part of this walk without carrying a pair of binoculars or a field guide would be sheer folly. The wildlife encountered along the route – coastal birds such as the black guillemot, seals and porpoise, and a huge variety of coastal flora including uncommon orchids – is an integral part of the experience.

The local wildlife – from birds' eggs to cockles, shrimps and fish – has been or is still exploited. Haaf netting on the Solway goes back 1000 years ('haaf' is the Norse word for channel). There are extensive mussel and cockle beds where birds compete with humans for food. The River Irt was once famed for its freshwater pearls.

LITERARY AND HISTORICAL ASSOCIATIONS

The Cumbrian fells and dales have been the inspiration for a vast quantity of prose, poetry, novels and topographical writing over the centuries. By comparison the coastal zone is less extensively quoted, yet it is an area that has inspired writers to produce high quality work. Dickens, Coleridge, Wordsworth, Walter Scott, and more recently poet Norman Nicholson, have all caught the spirit of the coast.

Crossing the sands of Morecambe Bay (Stage 1)

The shoreline near Jenny Brown's Point, Silverdale (Stage 1)

The coast is littered with archaeological sites for it was important to the first settlers of Cumbria : food was readily available, as well as material for polishing stone axes. There are a number of Roman sites along the northern section of the coast, as well as evidence of Vikings, Normans and, later, the monastic movement. These waves of settlement have all left their indelible mark upon the landscape traversed by the walk.

ESTUARIES

Estuaries are a major feature along the Cumbrian coast. These beautiful, wild indentations are an absolute delight: Morecambe Bay, the Duddon Sands, the triple estuary of the Rivers Irt, Mite and Esk at Ravenglass, and then the Solway must all be circumnavigated. They hold many of the important natural history sites in the area and often have historical and literary associations.

Sandy and muddy shores meet with small cliffs or saltmash. Lugworms, sand eels, shrimps and bivalves burrow into their substrate to avoid desiccation at low tide. Glasswort grows in this in-between world of wet and dry. These most productive of habitats bring in wading birds to feed by the hundred thousand. The saltmarshes host geese in huge numbers and uncommon birds, like the bittern, may be seen in areas of reed beds. Otters play and hunt in the rivers.

SAFETY

'John Hartley senior of Sinkfall drowned in attempting to cross the Duddon sands on foot. He left home about noon and was brought back the same evening a corpse.' So reported Barrow farmer William Fisher in his diary for February 1844.

On the Ordnance Survey maps there are depicted a number of public rights of way – roads and footpaths – that cross the estuaries. These are historic highways, once major lines of communication before the days of turnpikes and railways. They were the trods of prehistoric peoples and of the Romans as much as of the border reivers on their cattle raids. They were the roads of approach for the first tourists to the Lake District, and the roads to salvation of Methodism's John Wesley and the

Quakers' George Fox. However, the gravestones in the surrounding churchyards tell that they were also the deathbeds of many travellers. It is essential to consult tide tables before you undertake the walk. Crossing the sands must *never* be taken as a short cut; they are places where knowledge and experience is essential.

We have explored many of the sands, shared the delights of their crossings with many others and spent countless hours watching the myriad changes of light on ebb and flow tides while listening to the call of oystercatcher, shelduck and curlew. The estuaries are truly spellbinding places. Because of the dangers of crossing these expanses no party to the Coastal Way will readily countenance an official route across the sands. There are official guides to the Kent and Leven Sands who can lead you over, but apart from this the risk is huge if you choose what might misleadingly appear a short, simple route away from the relative safety of the banks.

TIDES

As well as the estuaries some coastal sections of the route are liable to flooding as are the shoreline, saltmarsh or fields adjacent to the coast. In general terms the land near the shore and relatively level with it can be over-washed by tides of over 9.4m (Barrow tide tables). These are higher risk areas if there are strong winds from the west or southwest and/or after periods of heavy rainfall. In some cases alternate inland routes follow roads, whilst on some stretches you may have a more tiring walk on shingle strands. Careful planning solves the problem. Tide tables can be purchased at Tourist Information Centres and angling shops along the route. BBC Radio Cumbria and local newspapers publish tide times. A few sections of the walk display local tide tables.

High tides are stressful for wading birds that roost or feed along the coastline. Please try to avoid disturbing any such roosts by not using the sections close to the shoreline during periods of high tides.

USING THIS GUIDEBOOK

Maps

The route is described from south to north to ensure that the walker usually has the prevailing wind behind him. Most of this route is depicted on five Ordnance Survey Explorer maps which we strongly recommend that you carry:

OL6 Lake District South West
OL7 Lake District South East
303 Whitehaven and Workington
314 Solway Firth
315 Carlisle

The route shown has been amended in some cases since these maps were published so please compare it with the route as depicted in this book. The Explorer series is the best one to use in terms of practical information and will help you make the most of the whole experience.

The walk is also covered by four Landranger series maps:

85 Carlisle and the Solway Firth
89 West Cumbria
96 Barrow-in-Furness
97 Kendal and Morecambe

Planning your route

The route description for each stage of the Cumbria Coastal Way starts with a box indicating the distances involved. After each paragraph within the route description an approximate length for that particular stretch is given. This should enable you to work out how far to go each day (see also Appendix II).

To further assist this process each of the five sections has a list of public transport services, as well as information about accommodation (see below). Whilst some of the services are infrequent we have been able to use them during the preparation of most of this book. They – like the tides – play an important part at the planning stage. Details of timetables can be found by ringing Traveline on 0870 608 2 608, or emailing publictransport@cumbriacc.gov.uk. For the National Railway helpline call 08457 484950, or visit **www.northernrail.org** for local railway services.

The five main sections start and finish where there is a railway station. For the full walk Silverdale station (via Lancaster) is a good place to start, and you can return home from either Gretna or Carlisle station.

Accommodation is available throughout the walk and details of registered and inspected places of accommodation are also held by TICs (see Appendix I). They may also have lists of unregistered accommodation during peak seasons, but are usually unwilling to divulge this information. There are many more places to stay than those listed in the official guides, so try **www.golakes.co.uk**; **www.western-lakedistrict.co.uk**; **www.lakelandgateway.info**; or telephone for a brochure on 0870 5133059. More information can be found on **www.lake-district.com** or obtained from the TICs.

The plough at the Coastal Way signpost at Sandgate (Stage 2)

There are few traditional camping sites, and many potential sites are part of larger-scale caravan parks. There is very little YHA or YHA-style accommodation on the route.

COUNTRY CODE

It is important to take note of the Country Code and respect those who live and work in the countryside.

- **Be safe – plan ahead and follow any signs**

Even when going out locally, it's best to get the latest information about where and when you can go; for example, your rights to walk on some areas of open land may be restricted while work is carried out for safety reasons, or during bird breeding seasons. Follow local advice and signs, and be prepared for the unexpected.

- **Leave gates and property as you find them**

Please respect the working life of the countryside, as our actions can affect people's livelihoods, our heritage, and the safety and welfare of animals and ourselves.

- **Protect plants and animals and take your litter home**

We have a responsibility to protect our countryside now and for future generations, so make sure you don't harm animals, birds, plants or trees.

- **Keep dogs under close control**

The countryside is a great place to exercise dogs, but it's every owner's duty to make sure their dog is not a danger or nuisance to farm animals, wildlife or people.

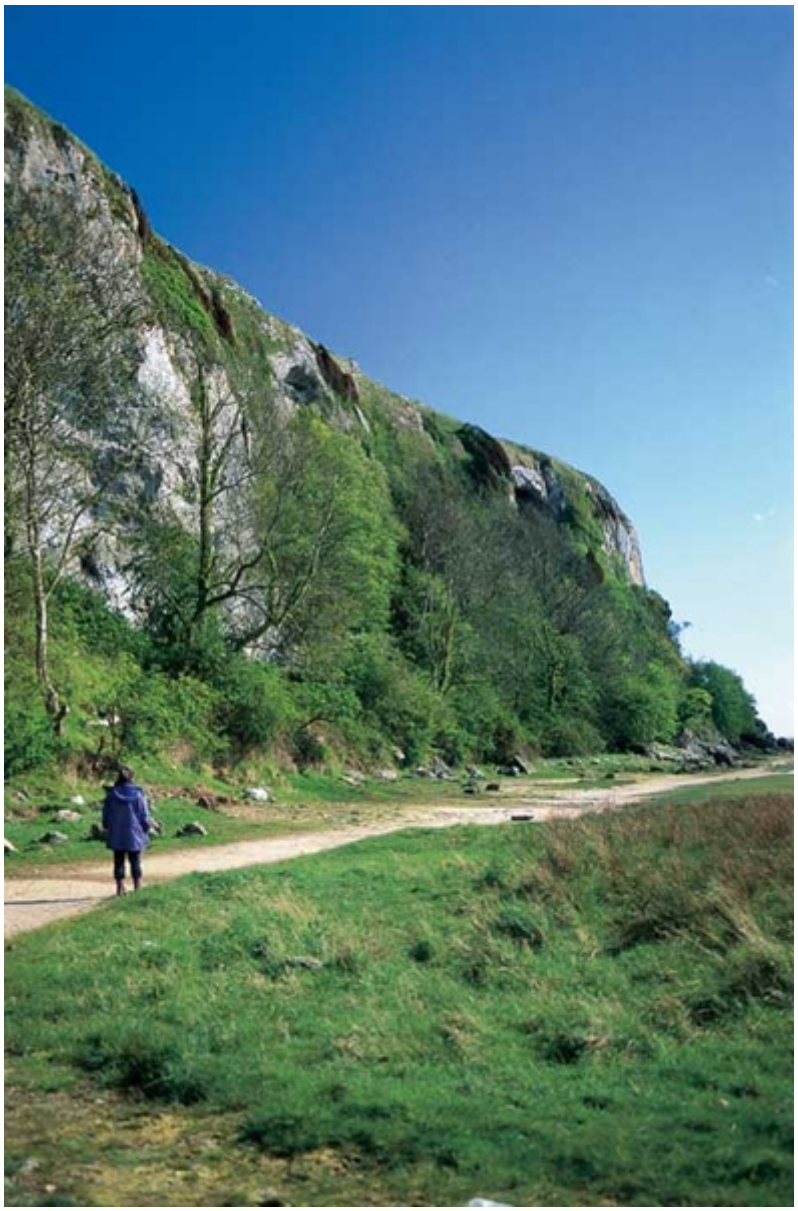
- **Consider other people**

Showing consideration and respect for other people makes the countryside a pleasant environment for everyone – at home, at work and at leisure.

Above all, if you walk all or part of this route and obtain a fraction of the enjoyment we have gained from our numerous visits to the Cumbrian coast then we shall have found writing this book more than worthwhile.

The ramparts of Piel Castle (Stage 3)

SECTION I – MORECAMBE BAY



The west cliff of Humphrey Head (Stage 2)

Introduction

Stage 1

Silverdale to Arnside: 11.1km (6.9 miles)

Arnside to Grange-over-Sands: 23.7km (14.7 miles)

Stage 2

Grange-over-Sands to Ulverston: 28.3km (17.3 miles)

Stage 3

Ulverston to Barrow-in-Furness: 23.9km (14.6 miles)

The first section of the walk leads from the Lancashire Coastal Path round the imposing estuary where the Rivers Kent and Leven and their tributaries merge into the tidal expanse. Before tracks were turnpiked or the railways constructed, most people travelling north crossed the sands of Morecambe Bay. Whilst there are still fishermen who seek a living on the estuary in traditional ways there are also ‘salaried’ sand pilots to guide people over the Kent and Leven Sands at low water.

Around 350 million years ago the eroded hills that once formed a central dome in primeval Lakeland gradually sank beneath the sea and were covered with marine sediments which formed carboniferous limestone. The rock is best seen on the shores of Morecambe Bay and on the Duddon estuary. Limestone produces a distinctive landscape and supports a special flora and, being an integral part of the smelting process, was important to the former iron industry of the Cumbrian coast.

After The Wash, Morecambe Bay is the largest area of intertidal estuarine flats in Britain. This SSSI stretches from Heysham to Walney Island lighthouse and is of international significance for overwintering wildfowl. It provides vital feeding and roosting grounds for migrating birds, and part of the bay is an RSPB reserve. Overwintering birds include oystercatcher, dunlin, knot, curlew, redshank, bar-tailed godwit, grey plover and ringed plover. Some of these birds nest round the bay, as do species such as lapwing, snipe, wheatear, reed bunting, common tern, sedge warbler and linnet. Ducks include shelduck, pintail, eider, goldeneye and redbreasted merganser.

The Kent viaduct and estuary at Arnside (Stage 1)

The saltmarshes that fringe the bay are important for their diverse vegetation which support a number of rare plants as well as nationally scarce invertebrates. Most of the intertidal flats consist of fine sand and silts, with some muddy areas. Cockle and mussel beds are a feature of the bay, as are scars or skeers (stony outcrops which are the remains of glacial drumlins).

Estuaries reflect light in different ways and at different states of the tide; they are constantly changing. This first section of the route gives ample opportunity to sample this whilst offering excellent photographic opportunities.

Walney Island can be reached from Barrow-in-Furness. A good full day's walk is needed to explore much of this island with its archaeological sites and renowned nature reserves at north and south ends. The island, providing sheltered harbouring and relatively flat land for housing development, played its part in the development of Barrow.

Transport and Accommodation

This section can be reached easily by rail to Silverdale or to Arnside. There are good supporting train services all the way between Silverdale and Barrow thus enabling day walkers to plan their route easily. The following make long full-day walks: Arnside to Grange; Grange to Ulverston; and Ulverston to Barrow.

This section is well served by the Furness Coast railway line. There are stations at Carnforth and Silverdale in Lancashire, Arnside, Grange-over-Sands, Kents Bank, Cark and Cartmel, Ulverston, Dalton, Roose and Barrow-in Furness.

A number of bus services connect with the walk, but with limited Sunday services:

55 Carnforth–Silverdale (not Sunday)
430 Carnforth–Silverdale (Tuesday and Thursday only)
LL1 Lancaster–Carnforth–Silverdale–Arnside (Sunday only)
550 Kendal–Milnthorpe–Silverdale (not Sunday)
552 Kendal–Levens–Milnthorpe–Arnside (not Sunday)
555 Lancaster–Kendal and on to Keswick and some to Carlisle
530/531 Kendal–Grange–Cartmel (Wednesday only)
532 Grange area local service
10 or 11 Barrow–Roa Island–Ulverston
1/1A Furness Hospital, Barrow and Biggar Bank (Walney). Service 6 also goes to Walney

West Shore
X35 Kendal–Grange–Ulverston–Barrow
There is a shuttle bus around Silverdale village from the station.

For walkers undertaking the full or a significant part of the route the following schedule is recommended. Each day's destination offers accommodation.

Walney Channel looking towards Black Combe

Day 1 Silverdale to Arnside

Day 2 Arnside to Grange (with accommodation also at Levens)

Day 3 Grange to Ulverston (with accommodation also available in Cark, Cartmel and Greenodd)

Day 4 Ulverston to Barrow (with limited accommodation in Bardsea, Baycliff and Rampside)

There is a youth hostel at Arnside; camping may be available at Silverdale, Arnside, Sampool (Levens), Grange and Piel Island.

The relevant TICs (see Appendix I) are Morecambe (Silverdale area), Kendal (Arnside and Levens), Grange (Cartmel Peninsula), Ulverston and Barrow.

STAGE 1

Silverdale to Arnside and Arnside to Grange-over-Sands

11.1km (6.9 miles), 23.7km (14.7 miles)

The Cumbria Coastal Way actually starts on the border between Cumbria and Lancashire, but our walk starts at Silverdale railway station and follows the last few miles of the Lancashire Coastal Path to the county border. This section traverses low cliffs, open coast and rich woodland. After passing Silverdale the route passes near to Arnside Tower, an imposing pele tower, built in the 15th century to provide safety from Scottish raiders.

The bulk of Arnside Knott forms a distinctive feature on this stretch. An SSSI, the designated area stretches from the shore to the far side of the lumpy fell. Beyond the second caravan site to the shore-side area are herbrich calcareous grasslands and woods that are home to several butterfly species: the Scotch argus, the Duke of Burgundy, high brown fritillary, pearl-bordered fritillary, northern brown argus, grayling and green hairstreak.

Arnside nestling on the shores of Morecambe Bay

Common lizards flit across the stones or bathe in the sun, whilst the tree species include Lancastrian whitebeam, small-leaved lime and the wild service tree. (A guide to wild flowers would prove of benefit to all sections of the Cumbria Coastal Way.)

The start of the walk, in the Silverdale–Arnside area, has associations with Charlotte and Emily Brontë who stayed here when there was an outbreak of fever at Haworth. There is also a connection with Elizabeth Gaskell, Charlotte's biographer, who frequently stayed near Silverdale and loved to watch the sun set over the Kent estuary from Lindeth Tower at Gibraltar Farm where she wrote many of her books.

SILVERDALE TO ARNSIDE

Leave the station and turn left on the road. Ignore the first turn left over the bridge unless you want to visit the RSPB's Leighton Moss Reserve. With bittern, marsh harrier, bearded tit and other water birds Leighton Moss Reserve is worthy of a diversion. Another part of the reserve has avocet and wading birds.

Go along the road, with care, and take the right fork at the junction (to Silverdale) and follow this road uphill. Go left at the next junction into Hollins Lane, and look for a footpath off to the left. This path, signed The Shore and Brown's Point, goes gently down through woodland, crosses a stile and continues down through more open ground before you come to a signpost and join the Lancashire Coastal Path (1.75km).

Go ahead to follow the shoreline path to the chimney and the house at Jenny Brown's Point. From beyond the houses follow the road up past the NT Jack Scar (to avoid the road for a short distance a detour round the scar cliff will reward you with good views), continue past Lindeth Tower and continue to bear left along Lindeth Road to reach a road junction just above the Silverdale Hotel (2km).

JENNY BROWN'S POINT

The chimney at Jenny Brown's Point is allegedly associated with copper smelting, but there is no evidence for this and its origin is debatable. A sea wall was built here to try and reclaim a large area of the bay and, along with the remains of a jetty, can be seen just after the Point.

At times of low tide go left past the hotel to the shore, and follow the edge, now bereft of saltmarsh, to reach a cove. At

high tide go right from the road junction into Stankelt Road and then go up the steps on your immediate left (footpath sign The Cove and Arnside), to a small gate where you enter a field (NT The Lots). Cross the middle of the long field and through another small gate, then walk to the far right-hand corner of the field above the small knolls. Beyond another gate an enclosed path leads down to the foreshore where you will find a cove with a small cave in the cliff (600m). The Lots is rich in wild flowers, but please keep to the path.

The shoreline chimney at Jenny Brown's Point, Silverdale

Go through the gate on your right and follow the road up, away from the shore, to a road junction. Turn left, and after a few hundred metres you will be at the county boundary (300m).

County Boundary to Arnside – the Cumbria Coastal Way

Continue along but then leave the road, on the slight left-hand bend, through the gate on your right, cross the road and walk on the grass parallel to the caravan site buildings. Cross the site access road to a signpost (you want Arnside Point), bear left and almost immediately right to go down Oak Road. After some 20m follow the path down left off the road and through a clump of trees. Go through the gate in the fence and then a small gate in the wall ahead. Follow along the left-hand wall, go through the gap at the end and then through a kissing-gate to reach the road (600m).

Cross the road and follow the metalled track to enter the caravan site, along Park Point Drive (signed to Far Arnside). Go through the caravan site and continue into the woods on the far side, after bearing left opposite Knott Drive (800m).

Once in the wood you reach a junction. Turn left and the path soon begins to follow the low cliffs overlooking the Kent estuary and Grange-over-Sands. The path is distinct and narrow in places. After wet weather it can be slippery. Continue to the fine viewpoint at Arnside Point (1km), where lizards, wood ants' nests and estuary birds can be seen. Arnside Point, St Bees Head, Humphrey Head, Dunnerholme and Annaside Banks provide the few rocky shores along the coast.

The cliffside path continues until it meets a ruined wall. Turn left through the gap in the wall by the four-trunked oak tree (signed White Creek Bay) and follow the path through woodland. You are now just inside the shoreline but out of view of the bay. Keep to the left of the caravans and eventually, on meeting a broader track from the right, go left on the shingle of the bay. At high tide turn up right through this caravan site shortly after going through the gap in the wall and cut through along the caravan site track (800m).

Turn right along the edge of the bay until, at the end of the shingle, sloping rock leads you up to the clifftop. Turn left on this path, ignore any paths leading down to the shore, and continue through the wood until, just short of a field, the right-hand fence forces you down onto the shore. Turn right on the shore, pass the house and continue along the track until it becomes a metalled road and the high tide route. Go left before the gateway to leave the road and follow the shore round the bluff and eventually to the promenade in Arnside. Continue round the seafront to the railway station (3.2km).

ARNSIDE

Until the coming of the railway Arnside was a quiet village with the old inn, the Fighting Cocks, dating back to 1660. It was originally a fishing village with a small salt-making industry and later became the only port of Westmorland. The promenade was constructed in 1897 when the railway brought an influx of tourists to the village.

The railway company built the pier at Arnside because their viaduct obstructed the passage of ships to the port of

Milnthorpe. The village had a boat-building company, Crossfields, which made trawlers to operate in Morecambe Bay. These sleek boats were designed like yachts and, until the advent of marine diesel engine, carried an enormous amount of sail. The tides at Arnside are very strong and many people come to the estuary side to watch the tidal bore race towards the viaduct.

ARNSIDE TO GRANGE-OVER-SANDS

If you do not wish to follow the route to Grange round the magnificent Kent estuary (missing some superb scenery, the delights of Levens Hall and varied wildlife) there are two possibilities.

Alternative 1: Crossing the Sands

The current Queen's Guide to the Kent Sands is Cedric Robinson. Despite this historic title, the monasteries were actually the first to employ guides, or carters, to ensure that people passed safely across the sands. On some weekends Cedric leads walks from Arnside across to Grange but you will need to check well in advance with Grange-over-Sands TIC (01539 534026) to find out if you can join such a group. Cedric is a local fisherman and author of several books on Morecambe Bay.

Alternative 2: The Railway

Trains run from Arnside to Grange. Under no circumstances are you allowed to walk over the railway viaduct. The structure has 50 piers, and when it was being built it was found that borings would have to be dropped 39m (98ft) to reach suitable foundations. The problem was solved by sinking hollow iron piles with a broad iron disc as a foot to act as pier supports. The first train crossed in 1857 and spelled the end not only of the cross-sands route but also for ships going to Sandside and Milnthorpe. The embankments constructed by the railway company enabled about 400ha (1000 acres) of land to be claimed from the estuary.

Arnside to Levens Bridge

The route continues from the railway station where you cross the footbridge and then turn right, through a gap in the fence, alonside the building. Go down to the bed of the fomer railway and follow it to the right and then through the left-hand gate (50m). The track bed is now a sea defence wall that is followed to Sandside (2km).

LAKELAND VIEWS

As you walk along the track there are superb views of the Kent estuary. Some of the higher Lakeland peaks peep over the foothills, Whitbarrow Scar just over the sands being the most prominent. The Coniston fells and the Fairfield Horseshoe, the Kentmere fells, the Langdale Pikes and, to the northeast, the Howgill fells, all come into view.


Causeway End
PH
A6
Levens Fm
Levens Hall
Kent
Leasgill
Moss Side Fm
PH
Heversham
Hall
Cumbria Coastal Way
Park Hill
Park Side
Dallam Tower
PH
Sandside
47
48
Wray Cott
Storth
Underlaid Wood
Kent Viaduct
B5282
Arnside
Ash Meadow
Arnside Moss
Carr Bank
Hazelslack
Tower

Crossing the sands of Morecambe Bay

When a filled-in road bridge blocks the way, go down to your left. Walk along the foreshore to reach the road, and follow it through Sandside until you reach the Ship Inn. Beyond the pub car park turn right on an enclosed path to reach a metalled track. Go left along this, pass the limestone quarry, and eventually re-emerge on to the B5282 road (1.4km).

Go straight across the road and down the steps by the footpath sign. After a stile, use the path along the old railway track bed. When the stony track bed gives way to grass, look for a path that slopes down the embankment to the left. Then, round the point, follow the banks of the River Bela along the right-hand fence until the fence meets the riverbank. Use the kissing-gate to enter the field on your right. Continue upstream, pass the weir, and go towards the superb single-arch bridge. The kissing-gate to the road lies to the right of the bridge (800m). The busy village of Milnthorpe lies 1km beyond the bridge. Dallam Tower, just over the road from the kissing-gate, was built in 1720, and fallow deer roam its parkland.

Go over the bridge, turn left and take the first road off to your left. Continue down the minor road north. When the road bends right, turn right, then first left, and right again at College Green Farm. This leads you up to the A6; turn left to reach Levens Hall and bridge over the River Kent (4.5km).

LEVENS HALL

It's worth setting aside a couple of hours to visit Elizabethan Levens Hall, with its superb topiary gardens. The café forms a convenient place for a break. The famous house, occupied by its owners, the Bagots, has a great deal of interest for all members of the family. The house is open from Sunday to Thursday from Easter until the end of September; admission tickets can be bought to house and gardens or just the gardens between 11am and 4.30pm.

The house was originally built in 1250–1300 as a pele tower to keep the de Redman family safe from marauding Scots. It has a wonderfully lived-in air; the notice on the front door tells you not to ring the bell, just come in. The oak-panelled walls add warmth to the building, and every nook and cranny has something interesting on display.

Outside you will find a shop, a good café (accessible without paying for entry), and a collection of steam engines. On Sundays and Bank Holiday Mondays, when it is fine, a showman's locomotive and a 1901 steam car may be seen in motion. Across the A6 from the Hall is the attractive Levens Hall Park, with Norwegian black fallow deer and rare Bagot goats. Down the river you might see heron, dipper, sand martin and goosander.

The famous topiary gardens of Levens Hall

The River Kent at Levens Bridge

Levens Bridge to Grange-over-Sands

Cross the bridge, turn left along the A590 and take a path into a wood by the River Kent. This path takes you along the riverbank and when the path re-emerges on the A590 by a junction continue ahead over a stile and follow the permissive path by the hedge side to a further stile. Cross this to join the verge on the A590, go left and take the first left-hand turning down the narrow road to Low Levens Farm (signed to Sampool Caravan Park) (800m).

LOW LEVENS

Low Levens, or Nether Levens, probably dates from the early 16th century. The house has superb elliptical chimneystacks, though the south cross wing is in ruins. Part of the house, with mullioned and transomed windows, was added in 1594.

Continue on this road to just beyond High Sampool, once a farmstead and, after the overhead wires, turn right down the enclosed track that becomes a bridleway (to Sampool Bridge). Continue round the right-hand bend and rejoin the A590 (1.8km).

Go left to cross the River Gilpin. Once over the bridge, take the first turn left and go down the tarmac farm access road to reach, after 1.6km, High Foulshaw Farm (1.9km). Crossing the River Gilpin marks the point at which the walk first passes into the Lake District National Park.

Continue on the road as it turns right and then left. After a further kink in the lane pass under overhead wires and go through the next gate on the left. In the field follow the left-hand boundary, go through the next gate and turn right. Follow along the right-hand hedge and, when the left-hand embankment veers off to the left, continue along the old enclosed lane. When the embankment is again reached your way goes through the kissing-gate by the gate on your right. The official path now follows between the embankment and the hedge to the next gate and kissing-gate some distance along, but the embankment is open access land (3.3km). During high tides waders may be roosting on the saltings and your presence on the embankment will disturb them; please keep to the footpath.

Go through the kissing-gate, follow the left-hand fence and go through the facing field gate where the track leads up to the embankment at the rocky outcrop of Birkswood Point (400m).

Follow the track along and up the next small section of embankment to a gate and former bridge. Continue on this track to reach the right-hand side of Crag Cottage. Continue ahead; the access track and bridge to the cottage goes to the right, towards the edge of Crag Wood (100m). Crag Wood (Woodland Trust) has open access and is a largely native woodland. The path through leads to the shore; retrace your steps to the entry gate.

Almost opposite the gate into Crag Wood, turn right off the track when a small building is seen, and cross the stiled footbridge to enter a field. In the field pass the left-hand end of a hedge and then go ahead to cross a stile in front of an overhead wire pole and where the next hedge becomes a fence. Go straight ahead on the old embankment, pass the short wall on your left, and go to cross a stile in the far left-hand corner of the field. Then cross to the far left-hand corner of the next field and go over a stile to the left of the bridge, to reach a road (750m). Turn left along the road, right at the first junction and pass through Meathop, a small hamlet of stone-built houses and farms where the road is more like part of a farmyard. Keep left at the two road junctions, pass further houses and ignore the entrances to Woodlands Hotel and the caravan sites and Meathop Grange. Continue along this lane until it bends right over the River Winster and then runs parallel to the railway line to meet the road at Grange-over-Sands (5.2km).

MEATHOP WOODS AND QUARRY

This SSSI (by Winster bridge) is found on a limestone hillock that forces the route inland around its northern slopes. The native deciduous woodland is relatively undisturbed and has served as an outdoor laboratory for many years. The quarry displays strata laid down 335 million years ago that are rich in fossils yielding clues about the carboniferous environment. Whilst this last stretch is along a road many flowers and butterflies may be seen.

On the right Castle Head can be seen downstream on the River Winster. This field study centre was once the house of local ironmaster John Wilkinson, who is credited with building the earliest iron boat. It is rumoured that his coffin, made of iron, was temporarily lost in the sands of the Kent whilst being brought to his house.

The lowland bog of Foulshaw Moss

Turn left along the road, ignore the first turning to the left, and then go left down a narrow path (signed to the Promenade), over the railway and along the start of the promenade to Grange railway station (650m).

GRANGE-OVER-SANDS

In his book *Cumbria* John Parker describes Grange-over-Sands as 'a grey limestone town of prosperous-looking houses overlooking Morecambe Bay'. He says '. . . it was the railway and the area's mild mean temperature that caused its expansion as a tourist resort and attracted builders of middle-class houses. The vast sands of the bay are rather muddy, and this probably saved Grange from rivalling Blackpool.' With its hillside location, its famous duck pond, and attractive railway station and promenade, the town is very popular with retired people and visitors.

STAGE 2

Grange-over-Sands to Ulverston

28.3km (17.3 miles)

Grange to Humphrey Head

From Grange railway station go under the railway bridge and follow the promenade to the right. Continue along the full length of the promenade to where a path goes down right to pass under the railway (1.5km).

Go along the railside path, then the road, which bends left into Cart Lane, and continue, with the railway near to your left, to the end of the road at Guides Farm. Go ahead along the enclosed path to reach some steps up to the road. Turn left down the road to Kents Bank railway station (1.5km). From Kents Bank station to Pigeon Cote Lane at Humphrey Head you can at low tide follow the seaward edge of the railway; this can be very wet in places.

The end of Humphrey Head protrudes into Morecambe Bay

Go up the road opposite the station and turn sharp left to descend the steep Jack Hill, at the junction at the top of the hill (1.2km).

At the bottom of the hill turn acutely left opposite the entrance to the car park to the near side of the Pheasant Inn, and go down through the gated farmyard and along the track into the field. Follow the fenced track, through a further gate, towards the far left-hand corner of this small field. Cross the stile between the two gates and follow the left-hand fence and hedge and leave the field by a stile in the far left-hand corner. Aim towards the tree in the far left-hand field corner, but cross the footbridge and kissing-gate found just to the right of the twin-trunked alder tree (800m).

Follow the left-hand ditch and hedge to a kissing-gate in the far left-hand field corner and, in the next field, the left-hand ditch points you to a gap stile in the stone wall ahead. Cross the track and the immediate facing stile to continue near the left-hand ditch and then, bearing slightly right, to pass through the gated railway underpass. Leave the next field by a stile in the far left-hand corner near the farm buildings and then go right along the edge of the saltmarsh to reach the gated end of Pigeon Cote Lane. Follow the enclosed lane west to the metalled road at the far end (1km).

HUMPHREY HEAD

It is worth either continuing left along the shore road to have good views of Humphrey Head (SSSI) and the site of its spa well, or bearing left at the entrance drive of the outdoor centre and then going to the top of Humphrey Head as detailed on the nature reserve sign. This dramatic limestone promontory jutting into Morecambe Bay has three main habitats: west-facing cliffs, grassland along the ridge, and east-facing deciduous woodland. Lower Carboniferous rocks dating back 325 million years ago have been exposed. The steep western cliffs have yew and whitebeam trees. Limestone flora such as bloody cranesbill, cowslip, thrift and rockrose might be seen. The gentler eastern slope holds one of the few coastal woodlands in this area, and is carpeted with dog's mercury and bluebells in spring. The area open to the public is the Joy Ketchen Nature Reserve managed by Cumbria Wildlife Trust. Dogs must be kept on leads.

The anthills and small outcrops of limestone pavement add interest to this area where, according to local legend, the last wolf in England was slain. The spa or 'Holy Well' on the western side is a foul-tasting spring, but a few centuries ago people visited it for its alleged curative properties.

Humphrey Head to Holker Hall

From the end of Pigeon Cote Lane turn right on the road and then left to go parallel with the railway. Turn left again at the junction below Wraysholme Farm with its pele tower. After a stretch of road, Willow Lane, you come to the next junction where you go left down a straight road, Moor Lane, past an old airfield, now a parachute centre, until it bends left near the entrance to the caravan site (3.3km).

MORECAMBE BAY SHRIMPS

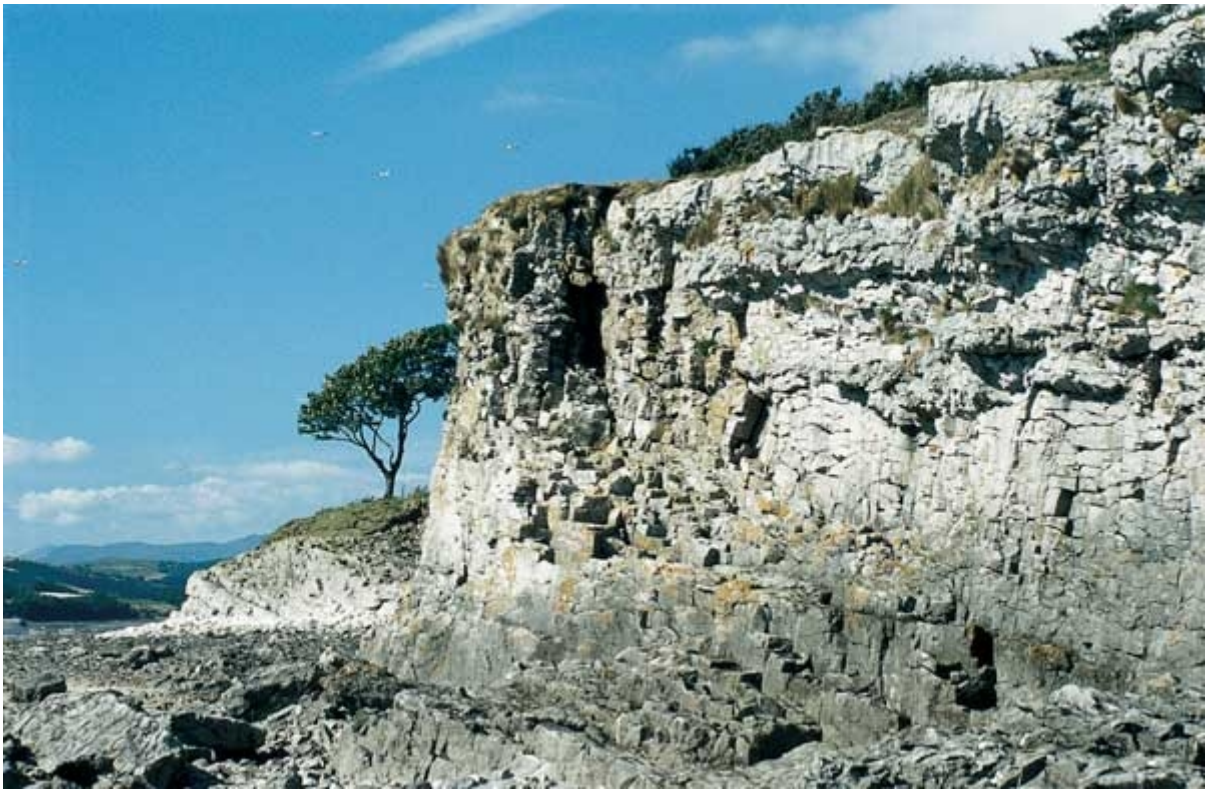
Local fisherfolk catch flukes, cockles and shrimps from the sands of Morecambe Bay and can often be seen at low tide from Humphrey Head. Once they took their nets on to the sands with horse-drawn carts but the remaining few use tractor-hauled carts. Sandgate and West Plains (shortly to be met on the route) are where the fishermen leave for the sands of the

bay. Shrimps are caught between March and the first frosts. A local co-operative prepares them for market; Morecambe Bay shrimps are a fine delicacy.

At West Plains, where the road bends left, go ahead through the kissing-gate to the left of the cattle grid to the saltings and turn sharp right to follow the embankment until it meets a stone wall which is followed, on the right, around Cowpren Point. Continue by the edge of the estuary past Cannon Winder Farm with its superb chimneys to arrive, crossing a stile by the eroded drumlin, at a house and farm at Sand Gate (400m). From here the route leaves the shoreline and the height gained does give extensive and excellent views of the Leven estuary.

CHAPEL ISLAND

In the estuary is Chapel Island. In his book *Furness and Cartmel* (1948) Knapp-Fisher describes Chapel Island as the 'ancient shrine and seat of a monk or priest who succoured and prayed for those in peril on the sands'. He says the chapel was set up less than 150 years ago as 'ancient ruins to add beauty to natural sites as was the fashion; the wall, with lancet windows and a circular window on Chapel Island, is on the very foundations of a chapel originally founded centuries ago by the monks of Cartmel Priory.'



The cliffs of Chapel Island in the Leven estuary

From Sand Gate follow the road inland, keeping left at the farm. After a short distance turn left down a long enclosed track that crosses over a bridge that sits high above the railway and then descends to the Engine Inn. Beyond the inn turn left on the road (B5278), and follow this up to the gates of Holker Hall (2.2km).

An **alternative route to Ulverston** is by train from Cark-in-Cartmel station – found by turning right along the road from the Engine Inn. Though this is hardly challenging for the walker it gives interesting views of the estuary.

HOLKER HALL

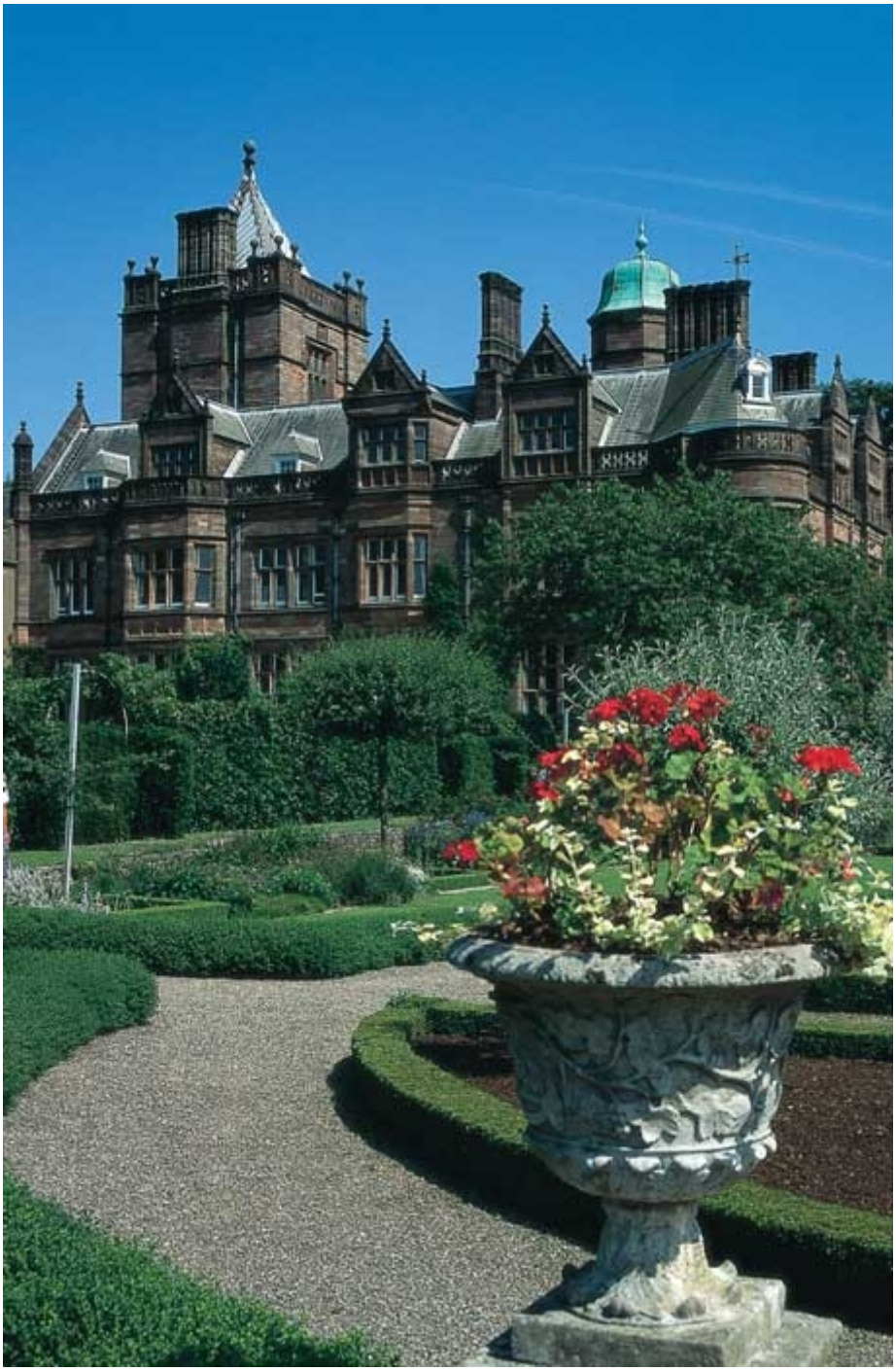
If you intend to visit Holker Hall, the house, gardens and park are open (not Saturdays) from Easter Sunday to the last Sunday in October (10.30am–6pm).

The Hall is the former home of the Dukes of Devonshire, from whom the present owners are descended. As well as the house there are gardens, woodlands, a large deer park and several more commercial attractions.

Holker Hall was built in 1604 by the Preston family, and inherited by the Lowther and then Cavendish families. The land originally came from Cartmel Priory. The principal rooms include the library with over 3500 volumes, some of them brought from Chatsworth in Derbyshire. The light switches are hidden behind imitation books with humorous titles positioned beside the doorway.

Holker to Haverthwaite

The walk continues along the B5278 road from the front gates of Holker, until you reach the rear entrance. Cross the road and go up the lane until it forks. Go left, through a gate, along the track by the left-hand wall with a crowning hedge, which you follow until coming to a gate in the wall facing you that leads into a wood. Turn immediately left before this gate, and go through the left-hand gate to follow an enclosed track until, at its far end, a further gate leads into a field (2.4km).



The gardens and house of Holker Hall

Go along the left-hand wall for 20m to reach a gate that offers views down towards Ulverston and the Leven estuary and turn right to follow the track, parallel to the overhead wires, to arrive at a further gate. Turn left before this gate and follow the signposted bridleway near the right-hand wall. Go through the gate in the fence and then take the right-hand fork, keeping by the wall. Go through the next gate on your right and along the obvious path that descends the field gently. Pass through a gate in the fence line and continue straight ahead to a gate in a wall, near a caravan. Go forward to the farm access track and follow it to the yard of Burns Farm (1km).

In the yard, opposite the farmhouse, turn right through a gate to the right of the barn and go down the left-hand boundary of the field. Turn left after the old gateposts and then follow the left-hand boundary through two fields. Go through a gate in the left-hand corner of the second field, and cross another field to pass through a gate. Follow the right-hand wall, go through the first gateway and then follow the left-hand wall. After passing through a gate this wall bends left. Leave it to go straight ahead to pass through a further gate. Pass the overhead wires and continue straight ahead, following the right-hand wall, to go through a further gate in the field corner to meet a track. Turn right, go through the gate, and go along the track as it bears left to reach Speel Bank Farm (where red deer are farmed) and, after a further gate, the track becomes tarred (1.1km).

The Leven estuary as seen from Bigland Heights

Almost immediately leave the road to the left to climb the stile above the gate and go up the field below the left-hand wall. When the wall bends to the left continue straight up to a wooden post and then turn left to pass through a gate in the far corner of the field. A distinct track leads through a wood to a further gate and on to the open fell. After the gate go

straight ahead and pick up a track that you follow to the right and is well waymarked. Continue on this rutted track to the left of a small pool, and when it begins to descend towards a pylon, climb over a stile in the left-hand wall. Go half-right to go through the next gate in the fence, and then go half-left beneath a rocky outcrop and descend to the road, via two gates, to the left of a house (1.3km).

Cross the road diagonally right, go through the kissing-gate by a gate and then down the field to the small footbridge. Climb up towards the house, but turn left across the field with the wall to your right. Through the gate facing you a distinct path by the left-hand fence now takes you through a wood and, after a second gate, into a large field. Turn left in the field; follow the narrow path that soon gives an extensive vista of the estuary before descending by the left-hand wall to a gate and to reach Bigland Tarn (1.3km).

After the gate bear left, away from the tarn, pass the footpath sign, and then drop down to the lowest part of the land ahead. There is a wall and then a stream on your right. Go through a small gate in the wall and continue steadily down through the woods, ignoring any tracks crossing your path, to re-emerge on the B5278 Holker Road. Turn right to reach the bridge over the River Leven (1.2km). Low Wood, Haverthwaite, just off the road to the right, is a small hamlet and formerly a gunpowder manufactory.

Haverthwaite to Ulverston

Just before the bridge over the Leven turn left down the private road and when it bends slightly left, away from the river, go through the riverside kissing-gate. Follow the riverbank path through the first field, pass through the next kissing-gate by a field-gate and then go half-left in the next field to cross a footbridge over a ditch where the hedge from the left meets the riverbank. In the third field continue along the riverside path and rejoin the road by a further kissing-gate and bridge. Turn right down the road to the entrance to Roudsea Wood and Mosses Nature Reserve (1.8km).

ROUDSEA WOOD AND MOSSES NATIONAL NATURE RESERVE

This is a National Nature Reserve and forms a composite site of exceptionally diverse mosses and ancient woodlands lying almost at sea level. On the east the site merges with an extensive estuarine lowland raised mire system and, to the west, saltmarsh. These habitats support an outstanding variety of flowering plants and invertebrates. Roudsea Wood sits on two ridges of different rocks that give rise to calcareous and acidic soils as well as to bog and fen conditions. It is these different soils which have produced the woodlands that are claimed to be the most diverse in south Cumbria.

Besides a wide range of trees, flowers, endangered flies, nationally vulnerable beetles, and other invertebrates there are more than 50 species of birds, including nightjar, woodcock, reed bunting, curlew, owls and great spotted woodpecker. Adder, grass snake, slow worm and common lizard are recorded, and the mammals listed include red, roe and fallow deer, badger, red squirrel, otter, stoat, weasel, mink, mole, common and pigmy shrew, dormouse and hare. The area is of geological interest and caves in the limestone strata have been studied intensively. Access permits and a leaflet can be obtained from Natural England at the reserve office.

Continue along the road from the entrance to the nature reserve, through the wooded area and along through fields until the road bends sharply left. Leave the road here and go over the stile by the gate seen straight ahead to enter a field. Follow the left-hand boundary, go through the facing gate and then walk along the right-hand fence to cross a stile by a gate and cross an embankment. Cross this wet field directly towards Greenodd to reach a stile and then cross the large footbridge over the River Leven. You arrive on the A590 opposite Greenodd (1.5km). The Main Street in Greenodd – now bypassed by the A590 – can provide food. The village once served as a port for slate, iron ore and wood produce.

Turn left down the path below the road next to the Leven and continue until you reach a car park. Keep along the verge of the A590 and after 2km take the narrow second tarmac lane off to the left. Keep left at the next junction, follow the road across former and current railway bridges, pass to the right of Plumpton Hall with its impressive chimneys and continue down the track to the shore of the Leven estuary (4km).

The rolling countryside near the head of the Leven estuary and Greenodd

Go right to follow the shoreside path over the National Trust's Plumpton Marsh, to meet a road, some toilets and Ulverston Canal Foot. Here is the Bay Horse Hotel, known for good food (1km).

ULVERSTON

In the 18th century Ulverston was an iron ore port where up to 150 ships were based but, with the development of Liverpool, many ships moved to gain trade. The short but wide Ulverston Canal (which, though full of water, has its sea exit blocked) is one of only three built in Cumbria, the others being the Lancaster Canal from Preston to Kendal, and the Port Carlisle link. After the opening of the Ulverston Canal in 1796 the nearby Newlands mining company built an iron quay, and trade from coastal loading sites like Conishead Bank disappeared. The canal suffered from the vagaries of the shifting Leven channel which could, by moving away from the west bank, make it impossible for larger ships to pass.

Nevertheless the canal made Ulverston an important port until the mid-19th century when it was eclipsed by the railway. In its heyday in 1846 the canal was used by 946 ships of 61,000 tons. Iron ore, pig iron, bar iron, Kirkby Moor slate, limestone and grain were shipped out, and Wigan coal brought in.

If you wish to go into Ulverston town centre or the railway station follow the towpath from Canal Foot to Canal Head. Ulverston is an attractive market town. The main attractions for visitors are Hoad Hill and its replica lighthouse, the Laurel and Hardy Museum, the Lantern House Arts Centre, and Heron Glass workshops.

The next section of the walk, to Barrow, starts from Canal Foot. Add 2.5km each way if you want to visit the town centre.

STAGE 3

Ulverston to Barrow-in-Furness and Walney

23.9km (14.6 miles)

Canal Foot to Conishead

From the Bay Horse Inn at Canal Foot, Ulverston, take the road inland from the shore with the massive Glaxo Smith Kline pharmaceutical plant to your right. Take the second of two roads off to the left, signed Sandside and Sandhall, pass the houses and continue directly ahead on the Sandhall road (800m).

GLAXO SMITH KLINE PLANT

The works occupy the site of the former North Lonsdale Ironworks, hence the slag heaps on the seaward side of this stretch. The ironworks ceased production in 1938. The current works, set up to manufacture penicillin and streptomycin in 1947, is one of the multinational Glaxo Smith Kline antibiotic-producing plants and manufactures bulk active ingredients for a range of medicines.

Follow this road, cross a dyke and then go through a kissing-gate by a gate on your left to enter a field. In the field go half-right to a gate and stile behind the grounds of the houses, then follow the right-hand boundary and raised track to a gate and stile, pass some buildings to the left of the chimney and by a gate and stile to the road (800m). When the brick-works were demolished here the chimney was left standing to act as a guide for ships coming to Canal Foot.

Go along the road ahead and follow it left, passing the former railway-crossing house, to reach the shoreline track. Follow this down to a wall at Conishead Bank and the bottom of the grounds of Conishead Priory. At times of very high tide a path along the old railway line through the grounds of the Priory may be available (700m).

CONISHEAD BANK

According to Alfred Fell's *The Early Iron Industry of Furness and District* Conishead Bank is the source of the oldest reference to one local industry. A deed from William de Lancaster III (1220–46) granted land for a forge, a mine and dead wood to burn to the Prior of Conishead.

The Leven estuary below Conishead Priory

In the 18th century iron ore from nearby mines was shipped from Conishead Bank. The ancient road from Cartmel came ashore here, the only place where cliffs and peat mosses did not obstruct access to the land. The track then crossed the Furness peninsula and is referred to by some authors as a Roman road. A section across the marshy Goldmire valley was a Bronze Age 'corduroy' log road (a trackway made from branches laid down in sequence over flat, wet ground).

CONISHEAD PRIORY

Opposite the short section of wall along the estuary side is a woodland path leading up to Conishead Priory. The grounds may be closed at certain times of year.

The house on the site of Conishead Priory was built as a private residence in 1821 but later became a hydro, then a Durham miners' convalescent home and, most recently, the Manjushri Buddhist Centre. The Gothic revival house was built for Colonel Braddyll, and designed by Philip Wyatt, when the cross-sands route was still the main line of communication with the booming industries of western Cumbria.

The priory was founded by Gamel de Pennington during the 12th century as a hospital for the relief of 'the poor, decrepit, indigent and lepers', and later became an Augustinian priory. Around 1180 William de Lancaster, Baron of Kendal and Lord of the Manor of Ulverston under Furness Abbey, granted to the priory all Conishead, the church at Ulverston, 40 acres of fields, a saltworks and the rights of turbary (cutting peat or turf), pasture, pannnage (feeding pigs on fallen acorns), and timber-taking in his woods of Furness and Manor of Ulverston. The date at which the hospital ceased to function is uncertain. Until they surrendered to the Dissolution in the summer of 1536, the priors of Conishead had to maintain the guides over the Leven Sands.

The existing house is dominated by two towers over 30m high with traceried windows below showing the principal benefactors of the original priory. After its use as a convalescent home it fell into disrepair before being taken over in 1977 by the Manjushri Institute as a centre for Tibetan Buddhist studies. They have repaired the damage and have built a major Kadampa World Peace temple. The house and grounds are a fine testament to their work and can be visited. A guidebook is available giving information on the house, its history and restoration, the woods and grounds, and on the Buddhists who live and work there. For up-to-date information on opening days and times and tours (by prior appointment only) telephone Ulverston 01229 584029.

Conishead Priory

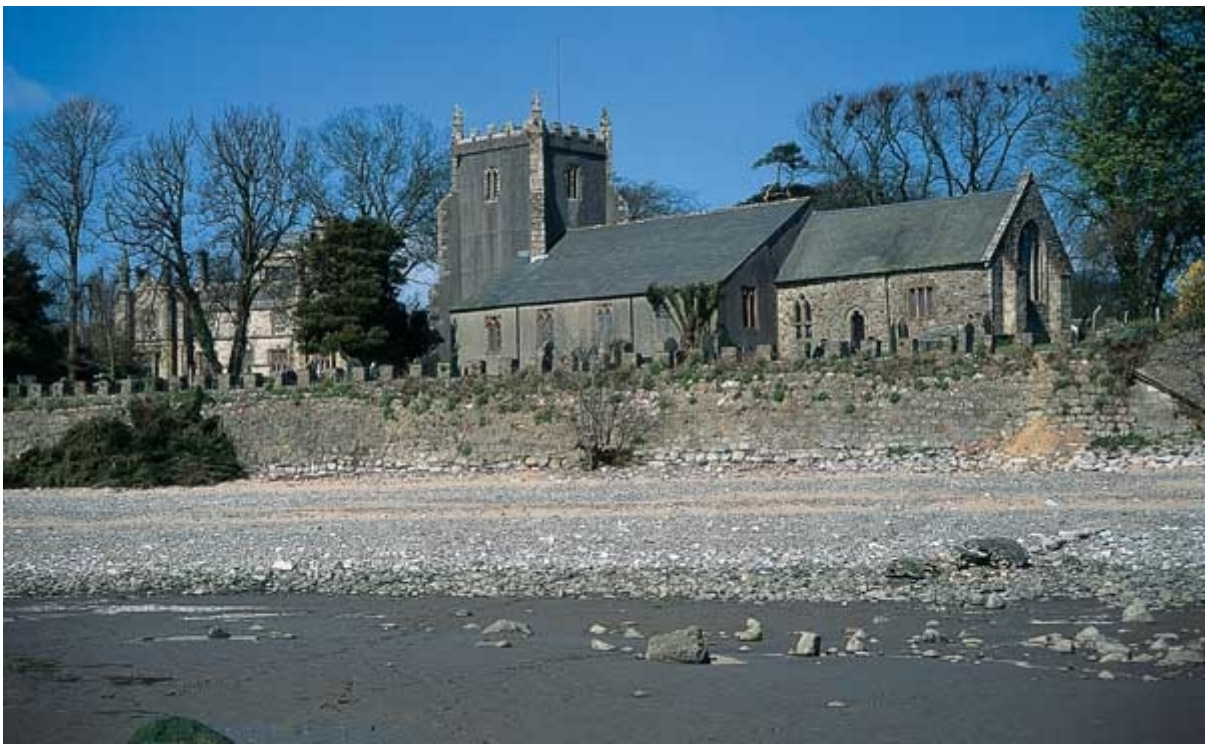
Conishead to Rampside and Roa Island

Continue along the seashore until you come to a car park near a small works. Go directly across to a stile and climb the hillock by the left-hand fence and then descend to a stile and to the shore at Bardsea Country Park (1.7km). A refreshment hut across the road is open seasonally. The village atop the hill is Bardsea, with its distinctive church built of local limestone. There is a pub in the village.

At low tide it is possible (and much safer than following the road) to walk along the foreshore from Bardsea towards Rampside where a sea wall gives you an alternative to the sands (10.4km). The narrow coastal strip is common land with open access.

SEA WOOD SSSI AND ALDINGHAM

En route are points of interest at Sea Wood, Baycliffe, Aldingham and Rampside. Several lanes lead to Baycliff and to Aldingham providing a way of leaving the shore. Sea Wood SSSI (Woodland Trust) is a rare example of woodland on boulder clay overlying limestone. This ancient woodland site has a diverse composition and the flora has benefited from being left ungrazed. If you walk on the shoreline a small cliff marks the boundary of the wood with a variety of plants.

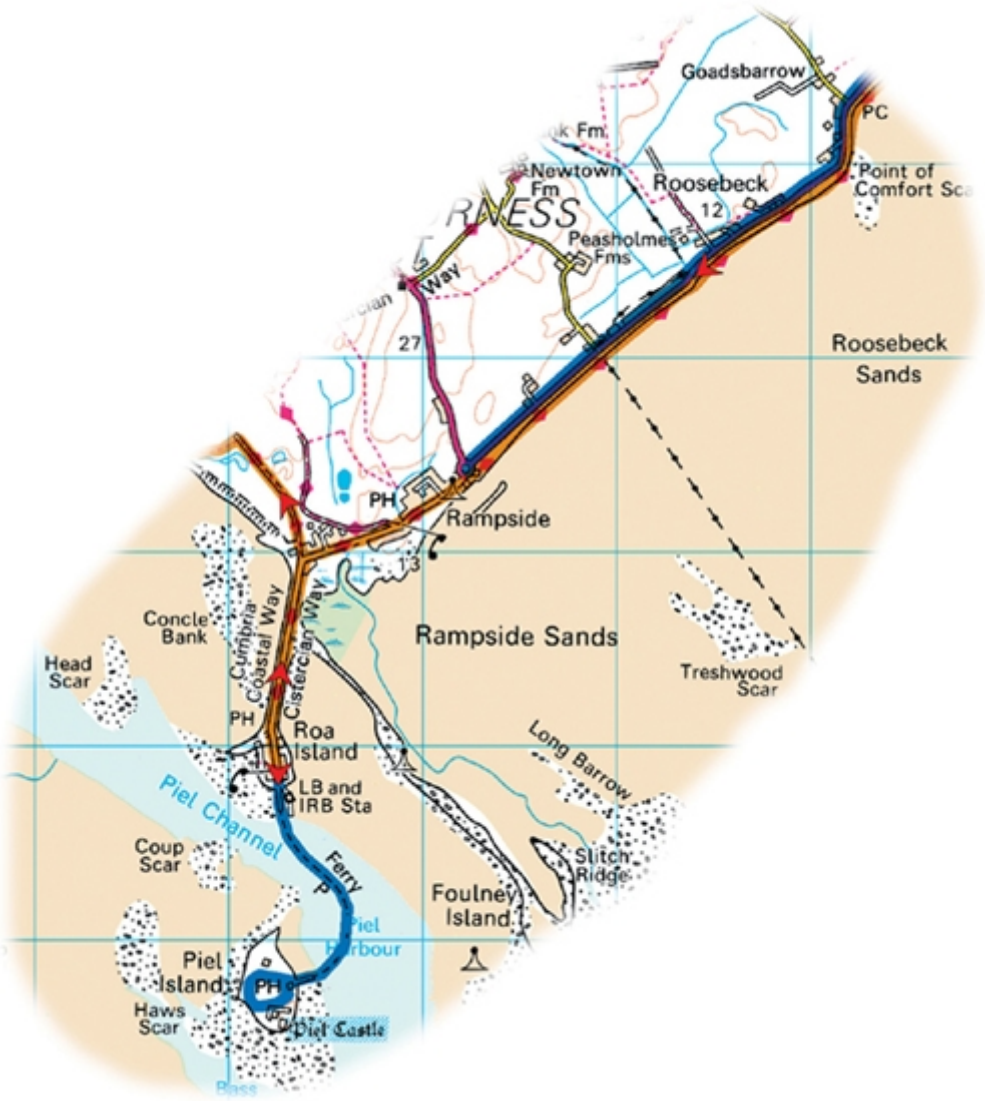


Aldinham's historic church

Aldingham church is dedicated to St Cuthbert and stands very close to the shore. The sea seems to have claimed part of the graveyard. The church was rebuilt in 1866 but part of the stonework is probably late 12th or early 13th century, as is the

priest’s doorway. The box pews and Norman arches are worth seeing. Just south of Aldingham, if you use the road, you arrive at Moat Farm to your left. Beyond the farm a path leads over an eroded drumlin, the motte site of Aldingham Castle.

The 17th-century Rampside Hall farmhouse, with its imposing ridge display of 12 chimneys, can be seen from the Way.



FOULNEY, ROA AND PIEL ISLANDS

From Rampside continue along the road and just beyond the Concle Inn go left along the road causeway to Roa Island (1km).

FOULNEY ISLAND

Walking along through Rampside and down the causeway to Roa you will be aware of a shingle ridge leading to Foulney Island (SSSI), famed for its birdlife and flora. Terns are the speciality and the site is wardened; visitors are discouraged during the breeding season. The legend of the goose barnacle originates at Foulney. The barnacles always seemed to occur in the same places as Barnacle geese. Because of the feathery appearance of the barnacles, the legend grew up that the geese hatched out of them.

ROA ISLAND

Roa Island was once a real island but is now linked to the mainland by a causeway built in 1847, along with a pier, for a steamer service to Fleetwood. Rather than pay dues for the use of this deep-water harbour to ship out iron ore, the railway company built docks at Barrow. In 1852 the pier was damaged in a storm; the Furness Railway Company purchased it for £15,000, and rebuilt the pier and causeway. Consequently iron ore could be shipped out and, in later times, tourists could disembark, board a train and be taken on a tour round the Lakes on the Furness Railway and their lake steamer.

The lifeboat house sits above the waters of Walney Channel a few paces from the house that belonged to Henry Schneider, the Barrow-in-Furness iron dealer. From here you can catch a small ferry to Piel Island.

The ramparts of Piel Castle

PIEL ISLAND

Piel Island boasts both a castle and a pub, the Ship Inn, whose licensee is crowned 'King of Piel'. The island is a favourite port of call for sailing enthusiasts from the Lancashire coast as well as for Barrovians. Like nearby Walney, Piel was probably formed by deposition from the retreating Duddon glacier. It served as a harbour in early centuries and in earlier times the Vikings may have used it for grazing. Later it was granted to Furness Abbey. In his *History of Lancashire* Baines quotes from a report of the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, in which it is stated that 'Between Mylford Haven in Wales and Carlisle . . . there is not one good haven for greate shyppes to londe or ryde in but one which is in the furthest part of Lancashire called Pylle of Fodder.'

The monks of Furness Abbey gained the land at Rampside along with Piel, and its harbour became important to their commercial life. The 12th-century castle was built by the monks partly as a warehouse and also to guard the entrance to the channel from whence all their wool and iron was shipped out. The battlements were never completed and the castle served as a base for smuggling: the monks had a taste for fine wine.

The cloisters of Furness Abbey

Much remains of the sandstone fortification but the seaward side has lost some of its grandeur. The atmosphere is such that you feel it ought to be fully restored. The Duke of Buccleuch made some attempt at restoration in 1876–8, and English Heritage carried out further work in the late 1980s. There is open access to the site, but not into the castle.

It was on Piel in 1487 that Lambert Simnel, pretender to the English throne, landed with about 8000 men. After marching via Ulverston and the cross-bay routes Simnel's army was destroyed at Stoke-on-Trent. Piel may have been an intended site of a bridgehead of the Spanish Armada.

Rampside to Barrow

From here, suitably refreshed at the Ship Inn, return by ferry to Roa Island.

To reach Barrow, walk back along the causeway from Roa towards Rampside (1km). Facing you at the end of the causeway, where the road bends to the right, is a house that was the former Rampside station. Go straight ahead, to the right of the house, to follow an enclosed track. This was the railway bed on what is now part of the Westfield Trail Greenway, part of the local Furness Greenways network of off-road routes. Made for a variety of users they are surfaced, sometimes in tarmac, more suited to cyclists than walkers. When a gate bars your way, go left down the enclosed path and follow it round Westfield Point with the gas terminal to your right (3.1km). At these terminals British Gas collect natural gas from the Morecambe Bay field some 40km out to sea and treat it prior to distribution.

Follow the straight line of the old railway past the Roosecote Gas Power Station to reach the edge of Salthouse Pool.

Continue past the sewage works, the industrial Salthouse Mills, the corner of Cavendish Dock basin and round and under the railway line (2km).

ROOSECOTE SANDS

The spread of Roosecote Sands to your left – particularly when you pass Westfield Point – gives ample opportunities for birdwatching. The rocks of Ridding Head stand out above the flow tide and provide a favourite roosting place. This area is designated an SSSI largely because of the geological and biological interest of the mudflats, saltmarsh, lagoons, shingle and sand-dune systems. Cavendish Dock and Walney Nature Reserve also come within this designated area. The coal-fired power station closed in the 1980s but was reopened when converted to burning gas.

Go under the railway bridge and left along Salthouse Road. When the Strand goes off left continue straight ahead along Duke Street, past Schneider Square to the Town Hall (1.1km).

One of the impressive stained glass windows in Barrow's Town Hall

THE DEVELOPMENT OF BARROW

To the right, on Salthouse Road, lies a small terrace of cottages built in local red sandstone for railway workers in 1846. Their construction increased the number of houses in Barrow by 25 percent. St George's Church nearby is one of the few buildings in Barrow made from Lakeland slate. The south chapel is called Ramsden Chapel after Sir James Ramsden (1822–96), Barrow's first mayor and the driving force behind the development of the Furness Railway and steelmaking in the town. The Strand was intended to be the town centre in Ramsden's plan and the building to your left, by the dock road, was the original railway station.

The Town Hall, completed in 1882, is of classic Victorian Gothic style and crowned with a high clock tower. Tours are sometimes available. Do not miss the stained glass window or the climb to the tower. The main entrance, a *porte-cochère* (carriage entrance) is at the rear, giving the hall a strange inverted feeling. Inside the red sandstone and slate-roofed building there is an almost Dickensian atmosphere. Opposite the Town Hall is the tourist information office and it stocks some useful leaflets on walking tour routes for Barrow and Walney.

Off Duke Street you can see largely unaltered grid-patterned streets of 19th-century artisans' terraced houses. If you look above shop level Duke Street has some attractive examples of moulded brickwork from the 1870s. The terraces arranged in and around the town centre enable Barrow's residents to live close to amenities. Unlike many towns in the northwest with their uninhabited town centres, Barrow still has a heart.

Continue down Duke Street to Ramsden Square. Turn left onto Abbey Road, then right at the next junction into Hindpool Road, and then left to reach the Dock Museum (1.25km). Just after the museum turn right to reach Jubilee Bridge and Walney Island (if that extension is intended). To reach the railway station, go right down Abbey Road to find the station on your left after 1km.

As you go down Abbey Road, one of Ramsden's tree-lined streets, you will see a series of solid, individual, grand-looking buildings. After reaching Ramsden Square, continue down Duke Street. The statue of Ramsden, dated 1872, has an interesting plaque depicting the industrial foundation of the town. Buses 5/5A and 6/6A will take you to within walking distance of the superb sandstone ruins of Furness Abbey.

BARROW-IN-FURNESS

The name of the town is taken from Barrow Island, the site of a Norse burial ground. Today Barrow Island is the land between Walney Channel and Buccleuch Dock and is occupied by BAE Systems, whose huge submarine-building hall, shipbuilding complex and cranes dominate the skyline for miles around. The first major dock, the Devonshire, opened in 1867. Barrow grew rapidly, aiming to become a second Liverpool. Iron ore was shipped out as early as 1745 from the beach, and a quay was built in 1782 to cope with the increasing quantities. In 1850 Schneider stumbled over the vast Park deposits of iron ore north of Barrow, near Askam. By 1857 the railway had been connected to the main London–Glasgow route and blast furnaces had been erected. It was around this time that Ramsden started planning the new town of Barrow.

Walney Island

Walney Island is some 13km long and never quite 2km wide. The island is an esker, a remnant of the retreating Duddon glacier. The southernmost land in the county of Cumbria, it was occupied by Mesolithic hunter-fisherman after the ice age (around 5500–9500 years ago). Archaeological finds have included flints used for barbs of harpoons and arrowheads, and scrapers and knives to skin animals and carve wood and bone. Some of the axes were made from pebbles found in local boulder clay cliffs, whilst others result from Neolithic traffic of rough-hewn Lakeland axeheads some 3000 years ago.

The main axe factory site was at the north end, but remains of Neolithic and Beaker peoples have been found elsewhere on the island. This site was in use around 5000 years ago and involved in trade with Ireland as well as the more central Lake District. The name Walney may derive from 'walled island', either referring to the walls of stone pushed up the beaches by the sea or to the walls built by early settlers.

The South Walney Nature Reserve (SSSI) lies at the southernmost tip of the island. The site is based on an area of sand and shingle where some gravel extraction has occurred, and is a large breeding site for lesser black-backed and herring gulls. There are ringed plover, roseate tern, shelduck, greater black-backed gull, eider duck and seal. The shingle flora and the erosion and depositional features on the beach add further interest. The site is permanently wardened by the Cumbria Wildlife Trust. Admission is by permit only and this can be obtained at the warden's house by the reserve any day apart from Mondays (Bank Holidays excepted). May and June are the best times to visit; in winter large numbers of waders and wild-fowl feed and roost on the reserve.

The Trinity House Lighthouse on South End Haws was built of stone for £1000 in 1799 and guides shipping from Morecambe Bay by way of Walney to Barrow docks. This listed building, a base for soldiers and prisoners of war during World War II, is not open to the public. If you want to spend a day exploring Walney Island, the route is waymarked as part of the Cumbria Coastal Way. Use local bus services; a full walking tour of all the sites can extend to 30km.

The other significant area for natural historians is North Walney National Nature Reserve at the north tip of the island. It is a sand-dune system that probably started forming just after the last ice age. The newer dunes to the north and west provide a contrasting habitat to the older more acidic dunes in the south and east. Heather, royal fern, carline thistle and some orchid species can be found. The rare natterjack toad is present, and birds and butterflies abound. Some 300 species of plants and 130 species of birds have been recorded. A permit is not needed, and English Nature has a helpful leaflet. This area has some important prehistoric sites, and was also a monastic rabbit warren.

Jubilee Bridge was built to replace the ferry that served the then growing settlement of Vickerstown. Beginning life as a toll bridge in 1908, the ageing structure is, in part, a swing bridge, but large vessels rarely use this upper part of Walney Channel.

Just west of the bridge and promenade is Vickerstown Conservation Area. This settlement was a private housing venture as part of the overall development of the island as a resort and in conjunction with the expansion of the shipbuilding facilities. Vickers, the shipyard owners, took the site over and proceeded to build the estate on the lines of Port Sunlight the pioneering Lever Brothers village on the Wirral. Between 1899 and 1904 nearly 4000 houses, a bowling green, an institute reading room and a park were constructed. The streets were named after ships built at Barrow and after famous admirals. Many are still maintained with pride – hence the Conservation Area accolade. The area behind the school is especially worth a visit with its Powerful and Melampus Streets.

Terraced housing in Walney

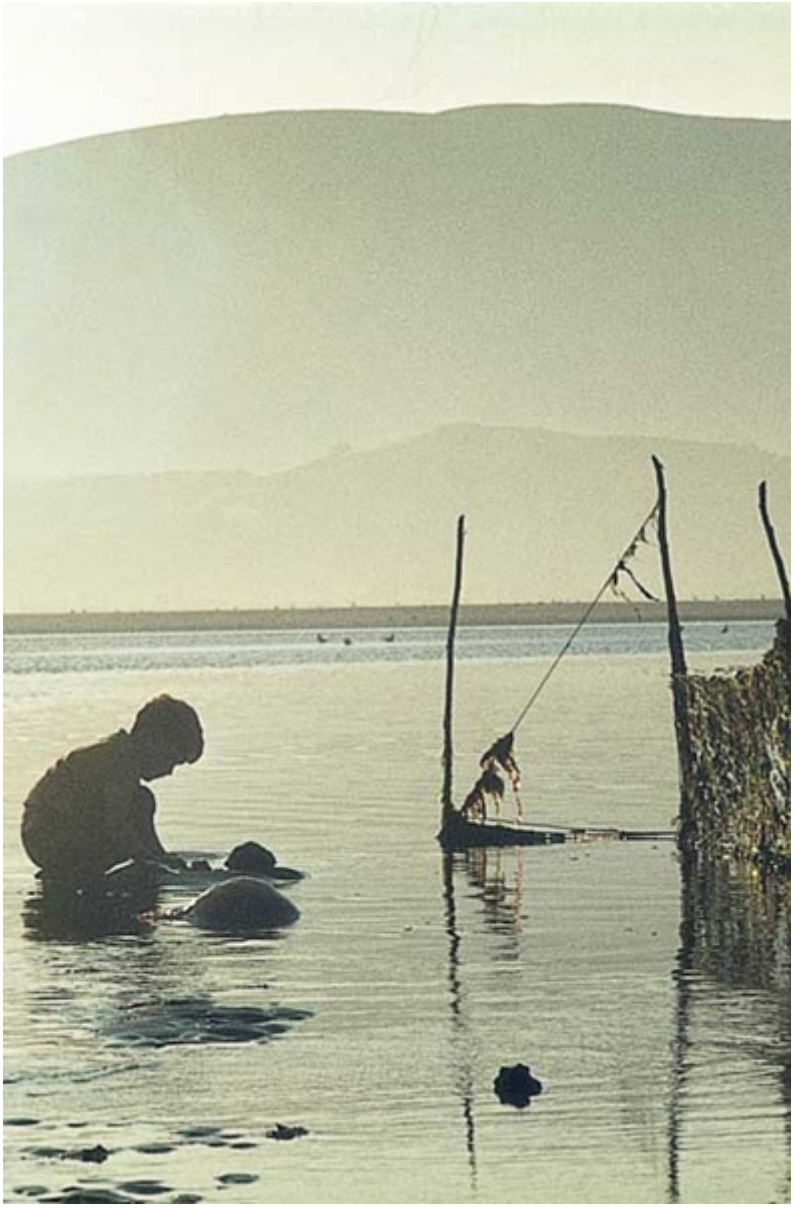
North Scale is one of Walney's older settlements. Some houses date from the 17th-century and provide interesting examples of vernacular architecture. They are built of stones gathered from the foreshore and rendered. Several fords once linked the island to the mainland and Barrow Island but were mostly lost when Barrow began to expand. One ford, between North Scale and Hindpool, is still a concrete footbridge and walkway that can be used at low tide. This was originally built in 1860 to replace the worn stepping stones of the adjacent 'Low Steps'. Further north a public right of way, still there, required a tunnel under the slag banks to give people access to the ford.

Silverweed – a plant of shingle beaches

The hamlet of Biggar is a compact, introspective-looking settlement. Local building materials, cobble walls or rough-cast facing and slate roofs add to the feeling of a sheltered haven and, perhaps, secrecy and smuggling. The small village has a number of attractive old buildings, including Town End Farm, New Inn, Manor Farmhouse, Hill Farm, Piel View Farm and the Queen's Arms.

Just outside Biggar is Biggar Dyke, an embankment constructed by the monks of Furness Abbey to protect their adjacent fields from the tides. After the Dissolution the tenants were granted reduced rents in return for maintaining the dyke. Some of them neglected their duties and there are court records of tenants being fined for not providing their share of labour.

SECTION II – THE DUDDON ESTUARY



On the Duddon Sands (Stage 4)

INTRODUCTION

Stage 4

Barrow-in-Furness to Broughton-in-Furness: 23.8km (14.5 miles)

Stage 5

Broughton to Millom and Silecroft: 23.5km (14.3 miles)

The Duddon estuary is one of England's few remaining wild, romantic places. The different combinations of sun and tide create myriad changes of light, culminating in wonderful sunsets and beautiful reflections over the wet sands and river channel. Proposals to construct a road bridge and wind-power stations around the estuary sadly show just how intrusive man's influence can be.

The estuary was formed when the dome of Lakeland rocks was carved up by the power of its rivers, including the Duddon, which followed a fault line. During the ice age glaciers further deepened its bed. As the area warmed up the sea level rose and flooded the over-deepened river valley, turning it into an estuary. Over the next 10,000 years ice and water have further sculpted the fells and contributed to the silting up of the estuary.

Black Combe at sunset over the Duddon Sands (Stage 4)

The Way takes us over recently deposited sediments and the oldest rocks of the area. These, the Skiddaw Slates (formed under the sea), form the mass of Black Combe. This fell dominates the route for much of the southern part of the walk, and acted as a beacon for Norse immigrants who came to the Duddon estuary by way of Ireland, the Isle of Man or Scotland in the late 9th/early 10th centuries.

The Duddon rises above Wrynose Pass and before 1974 formed the boundary between Lancashire's High Furness and Cumberland. At other times the river has formed the boundary between England and Strathclyde.

The Duddon is a source of cockles that, when abundant, are said to be the finest available. Local people still catch salmon here, though in fewer numbers than before, and today the estuary is known for its sea trout.

The Ordnance Survey map shows a number of old tracks across the estuary. Unlike the Kent and Leven Sands it never had a salaried guide, although a local inn used to provide a sand pilot on request.

Transport and Accommodation

Day walkers are served by a reasonable train service and an infrequent bus service. **Long-distance walkers** could accomplish this section in one long day, but Barrow to Broughton and then Broughton to Millom or Silecroft make for two more satisfying days.

The coastal railway from Barrow-in-Furness to Millom has a regular service but does not run on Sundays. The intermediate stations of Askam, Kirkby, Foxfield and Green Road are all adjacent to the walk.

The following bus services can be useful:

509 Askam–Kirkby-in-Furness–Ulverston (Thursday only)
511 Millom–Broughton–Ulverston (not Sunday)
7/X7 Barrow–Kirkby–Broughton–Millom–Haverigg Accommodation is available in Kirkby-in-Furness,

Broughton, Millom and Silecroft. Camping may be available at Kirkby, Broughton, Haverigg and Silecroft.

The relevant TICs (see Appendix I) are Barrow, Broughton and Millom.

STAGE 4

Barrow-in-Furness to Broughton-in-Furness

23.8km (14.5 miles)

Barrow to Askam

From the Barrow side of Jubilee Bridge turn left along the path through Channelside Haven gardens and follow the path, near Walney Channel, until you come to the basin in front of the Dock Museum (500m). The museum (free, closed Mondays) has a superb collection illustrating much of Barrow's past and, not least, its shipbuilding tradition. Well worth a visit.

Continue from the Channelside Promenade to follow along the channel. When you come to some steps climb to a car park (an excellent sculpture of an iron ore miner gives the name Red Man's Way) before continuing along the channel-side path signed to Cocken Tunnel. Keep left at any further branches in the path and climb the reclaimed slag bank, with super views of Walney and Barrow, before descending to the gap between the reclaimed and quarry-worked slag bank (2km).

BARROW'S IRONWORKS

By 1876 Barrow could claim to have the world's largest ironworks. The local iron-rich haematite ore gave the area a huge advantage when the Bessemer steel-making process was developed. Once the process had been adapted to use phosphor-containing ores, these natural advantages were lost. The steelworks finally closed in 1983. Shipbuilding formed the basis of the town's future prosperity, and is still vital today.

Note At low tide it is possible to walk from Cocken Tunnel along the channel side by the slag bank to avoid some road walking.

The mapped route goes down to the lowest part of the gap between the slag banks, once Cocken Tunnel, and then turns right to go under a bridge to reach a road. Go left along the road and continue left into Park Road. After a rise on the road and a 40mph sign (opposite the last house on the right of Ormsgill) look for a path off to your left (to Sowerby Lodge). This is by a small Transco gas building set back off the road (1.5km).

Go through the stile between two gates, go through the next gate and continue to follow the left-hand hedge down the field and cross the gated railway bridge. Continue along the track to the farm, turn left through the yard, leave by the double gates and continue down the enclosed track to the shore. Here you rejoin the low-tide alternative from Cocken

Tunnel (550m).

Once on the coast, follow the waymarked path right and around Scarth Bite. When a fence is reached cross a stile by a gate up to the right. Continue near the tidal area on a green path which you follow to meet the track to Lowsy Point by Red Gutter (2.6km).

Some think Lowsy Point aptly named; however, continue from the last 'huts' down to the shore. Follow this around until you eventually arrive at Roanhead. Do not go over the dunes or cross the fields (3.5km).

SCARTH BITE

The tidal bay of Scarth Bite provides a backdrop for flights of shelduck and feeding oystercatcher. The public right of way crosses the middle of the bay but proves to be a glutinous trudge. The waymarked path round the edge is far preferable. Between the north end of Walney and the jutting peninsula of Sandscale Haws Millom and Black Combe look tantalisingly close.

It is once you have rounded Lowsy Point and the headland that the Duddon estuary comes into full view. From the sands to the top of the Scafells the vista is stupendous. It must, despite the landscape intrusions, be one of the best views in England. Yet imagine the proposed bridge cutting that view, carrying odd juggernaut across your perspective. Let's hope it never comes to fruition.

SANDSCALE HAWS NATIONAL NATURE RESERVE

Sandscale Haws sand-dune system is a designated SSSI and National Nature Reserve because of its interesting flora (nearly 600 species) and fauna. Natterjack toads, some 15 percent of the British population, live in pools along with examples of all other native amphibians. One pool has a boardwalk for easy access. Protected orchids grow along the dunes – not least the dune helleborine and coralroot orchid – along with creeping willow, hare-bell, lady's bedstraw and thyme. Twenty-three species of butterfly have also been recorded. The National Trust produces an excellent leaflet on the area, available at the site or from Barrow TIC.

ROANHEAD

A small terrace of houses by the car park and a refreshment cabin/shop mark Roanhead; this is where Barrow goes to the seaside. Along the shore from Roanhead to Askam are several ponds used by fisher folk and these red, barren margins are the remains of former haematite mines, the source of the area's prosperity. The fabulous Park mine, discovered by Schneider in 1849, lies nearby. On the point of abandoning his project Schneider discovered the richest lode of haematite then known in Britain. Only later did Hodbarrow mines at Millom exceed Park.

Continue along the foreshore from Roanhead, pass under the bridge of Askam Pier and keep to the seaward side of the Inshore Rescue building to reach Askam via some steps that lead up to Duddon Road car park (2.9km). The railway station is some 700m down this road.

ASKAM

The first sign of Askam-in-Furness is the 'pier' that looks like a futile attempt to dam the Duddon. This was where slag from the local ironworks was tipped. The ironworks closed in 1918, its life prolonged by World War I, and the derelict works were demolished in 1933–4.

Askam was a small industrial town where back-to-back houses line grid-plan streets with names such as Foundry Road. The original town plan was never completed, as shown by gaps in the grids of older terraces, and the plan to develop it as a Victorian seaside town came to nought. Until 1865 this area was simply open marshy country with neighbouring rabbit warrens.

Askam to Kirkby

It is tempting to think that Millom is only a short stroll over the sands of the Duddon estuary. Indeed a 'public highway' does go this way, but the time between tides is shorter here than further up the estuary and incidents of drowning are not unknown. When Millom was expanding in the 19th century those who perished here had often come to look for employment and were, to quote William Palmer, 'mostly out of work and others with little strength to fight against storm and fog and menacing waters'.

Continue along the shoreline to reach the right-hand edge of the limestone promontory of Dunnerholme, with the golf course to your right (2.3km).

DUNNERHOLME

Dunnerholme is a small but impressive limestone finger that juts into the estuary. It is worth stopping here for a while, if only to shelter from the breeze and enjoy the view. In the foreground the weathered quarry and the elevated golf tee of the Holme give way to the sea and the sands, while the wonderful backdrop of Lakeland fells include Black Combe, Scafell Pikes, Scafell and the Coniston fells.

From the foot of Dunnerholme, looking across the Duddon Sands to Black Combe

Between the golf course and the railway line are a series of wet slacks, one of several places where you may see or, more likely hear, natterjack toad. Just over the railway line from Dunnerholme is Marsh Grange Farm. The house is late 17th century 'with wooden cross windows and a pair of gate piers too grand for it', according to Nicholas Pevsner, author of *Buildings of England* (North Lancashire). The farm site was previously a grange farm owned by Furness Abbey. The large chimneys can be seen from the Way.

From the landward side of Dunnerholme go to the left-hand side of an overhead wire pole and then to the left of a wall (enclosing the seventh green). Continue across the remainder of the golf course, and then along the right-hand side of the raised foundations of an old wall. Cross the fence by the stile, then go straight ahead and cross the bridge over the dyke. From here continue north, making the best of the grass between the reeds (the way is far from smooth) as near as possible to the railway fence until you reach Kirkby-in-Furness railway station where Kirkby Pool flows to the Duddon. **Note** Part of this way is permissive, and dogs must be kept on a lead (3km).

Evening tranquility on the Duddon Sands

DUDDON-SIDE MARSHES

Sheep graze the saltmarshes but these animals are moved to safer pastures when higher tides cover the grass. Cumbria is famous for its salt-washed turf, prized by gardeners and footballers alike. Birds such as meadow pipit nest in hollows, and sea pinks are a feature of the Duddon-side marshes. Beware of high tides rising up the gullies and over the turf. In winter, when flocks of geese home in on the salting, joining large flocks of lapwing and godwit, these areas become even more magical.

Cross by the footbridge at the station and go left down the road. This part of Kirkby is called Sandside, and the Ship Inn is just across from the station. Continue on the road until it bends sharp right where the houses of Marshside begin on your left (1km).

KIRKBY-IN-FURNESS

The small hamlets making up the village of Kirkby-in-Furness are overshadowed by massive slate quarries and wind turbines on the fellside above. The moors, on which the quarries are situated, are composed of Silurian rocks and reach an altitude of 300m. Quarrying began in earnest in 1771 when Lord John Cavendish purchased the manor. Kirkby-in-Furness was then in Lancashire, but the slate was known as Westmorland Dark Blue. William Cavendish (1809–91) became Earl of Burlington and the quarries still carry the Burlington name. Kirkby ‘Roundhead’ and other varieties of slates were used on the roofs of back-to-back houses throughout the northwest during the Industrial Revolution.

The line of the inclined railway from the slate quarry, crossed on the road from the station, passes close to Kirkby Hall, a 16th-century manor house with some curious frescoes in the loft, formerly a chapel.

Kirkby to Broughton

At Marshside leave the road to the left of the first house, go along the short track and enter the field over the stile by a gate. Follow the right-hand boundary, go over the wooden walkway and then follow the left-hand side of the overhead wires to reach and cross a stile. Go left down the track, which becomes a road after crossing Kirkby Pool, through the yard of Moss Houses Farm, and then turn right at the road junction beyond. Follow this lane as it bends left, passes Waitham Wood, climbs to pass Waitham Hill Farm and then descends to cross the mossland of Angerton Moss (Waitham Common) in a straight line. The road then bends left, crosses the railway, follows it to the right and recrosses the line at Foxfield (3.2km).

DUDDON MOSSES

Angerton Moss and Waitham Common form part of the Duddon Mosses SSSI. After those of the Solway Plain this series of mosses are the most important lowland raised mires in Great Britain because of their size and diversity of habitats. The mosses support typical bog communities of sphagnum moss and other bog plants, along with heather, scrub and some woodland. Deer, bog bush-crickets, several species of dragonflies and adders may be seen. A boardwalk enables you to explore the moss with dry feet and is accessed from the route. A leaflet can be obtained from Natural England and suggests a circular route from the Way.

Over the Foxfield level crossing go left, cross the road (before the station and pub) and take the first lane off to the right. This surfaced lane climbs, offering good views of the estuary, Black Combe and later the Lakeland fells, goes through three gates and then passes the buildings of Coal Gate Farm. Leave the buildings, go along the lane and, at the end of the first

field on your left, enter the next field by a gate. Follow near the left-hand wall down the field (ignore the short lane and gates) to go over the stile facing you over the fence in the bottom left-hand corner of the field. Descend to cross the stile in the corner of the field and then cross this narrow but wet field diagonally right and go over the footbridge (1.7km).

On the facing bank turn half-right and climb the short slope by the sycamores and then continue directly up the bank over the golf course to a grassy, shallow track. Follow the track ahead for 20m, and when it bends right continue directly ahead to reach a small wood. Pass through the wood and go ahead to a lane by some cottages (250m).

Looking down on Broughton-in-Furness

Follow the lane until you emerge on the road just above Broughton-in-Furness. Turn left and drop down to the village, with the village square straight ahead (800m).

BROUGHTON-IN-FURNESS

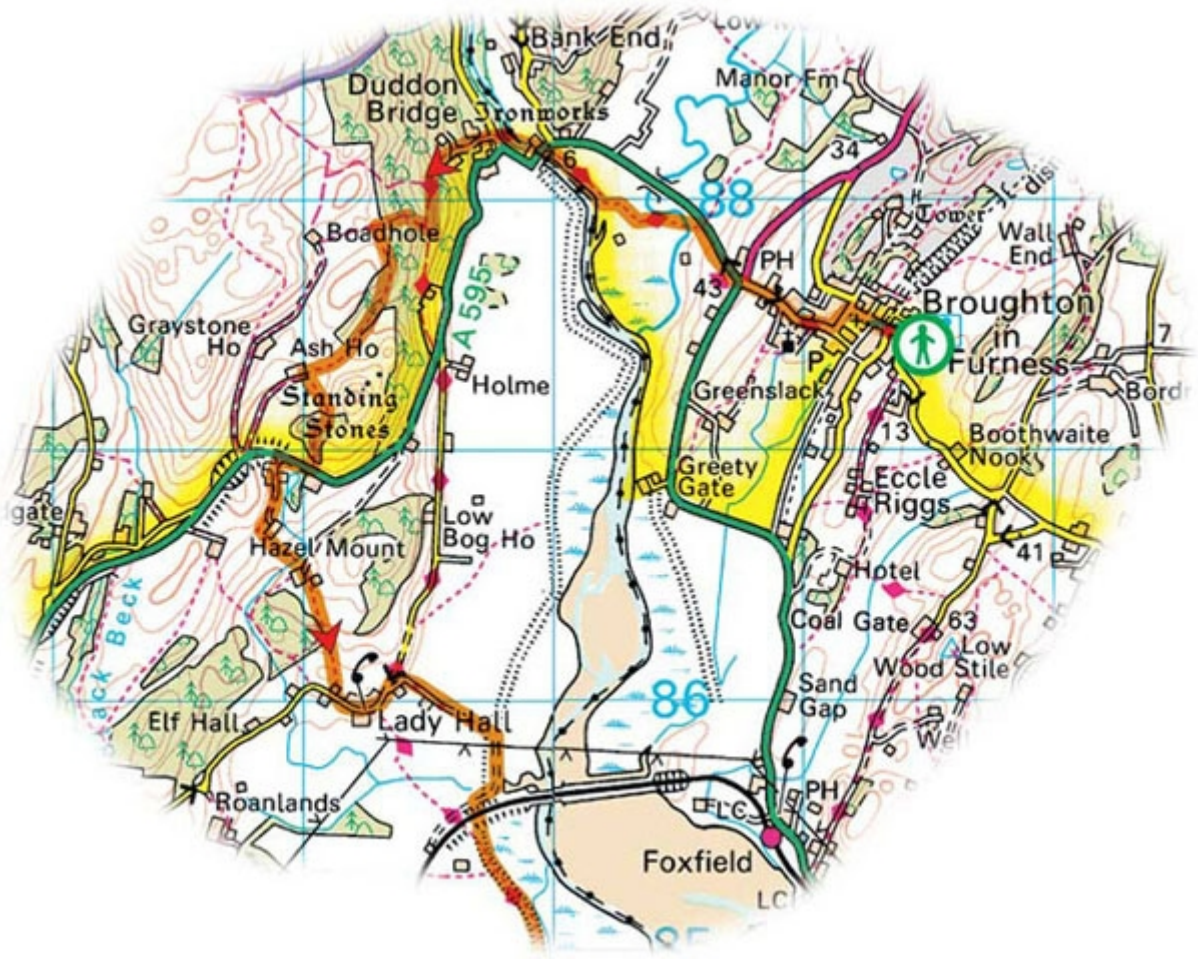
Broughton is thought to be Old English for ‘settlement by a brook’. The church dates from the 11th century and has Saxon walls and a Norman archway. To the north of the village is Broughton Tower that originated as a Norman keep. The attractive square is often obscured by parked cars but the obelisk, commemorating the 50th year of the reign of George III, and the stocks help Broughton retain some 18th-century market town atmosphere. There are good hostelries and eating places in the village.

STAGE 5

Broughton-in-Furness to Millom and Silecroft

23.8km (14.5 miles)

From the far left-hand corner of Broughton Square go left down Griffin Street, keep right at the Old King's Head and walk up the Millom Road. Turn right at the junction by High Cross Inn and go down the main road. At the end of the left-hand wall go left down a gated enclosed track over a bridge across the River Lickle, and continue over a stile by a gate to follow the right-hand boundary until you reach a gate by the riverbank. Through the gate, follow the riverside track, near an old quay, to reach the road at Duddon Bridge. Cross the bridge with care (1.7km).



Duddon Bridge to Millom

NORSE INFLUENCE

From Duddon Bridge to between Whitehaven and Workington the route passes through the borough of Copeland. The name was taken from the Norse *kaupland*, which means 'bought land'. The Scandinavians were seen as pirates, arriving by way of Scotland, Ireland and the Isle of Man in the late 9th/early 10th centuries. Eventually they settled and played a formative role in the history of the area. Norse place names still dominate the map of Cumbria, and Norse influence is apparent in many dialect words in use today. The Norse people may have been encouraged to settle in some coastal areas by the local rulers. Evidence from pollen deposits indicates that there was extensive tree clearance around this time, suggesting that land was brought into cultivation.

The Norse people created new farmlands from the wilder uplands, probably using these as summer pastures, and they almost certainly laid down the groundwork for later Norman estates, hunting chases and parish boundaries. The present borough boundary is very close to that of the Norman baronial hunting forest of Copeland, which was once a refuge for deer, wolf and wild boar. The borough now boasts England's highest peaks – Scafell Pikes and Scafell – and contains its deepest lake – Wastwater.

THE DUDDON IRON FURNACE

This was one of eight charcoal-fired furnaces set up in the southern Lakes in the early 18th century. The site was adjacent to charcoal-producing woodlands, not far from a supply of iron ore, and had access to water power for the furnace bellows. Dating from 1736–7, this furnace was working until 1867. The site is managed by the Lake District National Park Authority.

To reach the furnace, go over Duddon Bridge and right at the junction. After about 100m you will see the furnace on your left (250m).

Note The official route from Duddon Bridge to the railway viaduct is still under development, but the map on page 81 suggests a 3km route that bypasses this section. The route shown on OL6 to Lady Hall is wrong and involves dangerous road walking.

The historic charcoal-powered iron furnace sited at Duddon Bridge

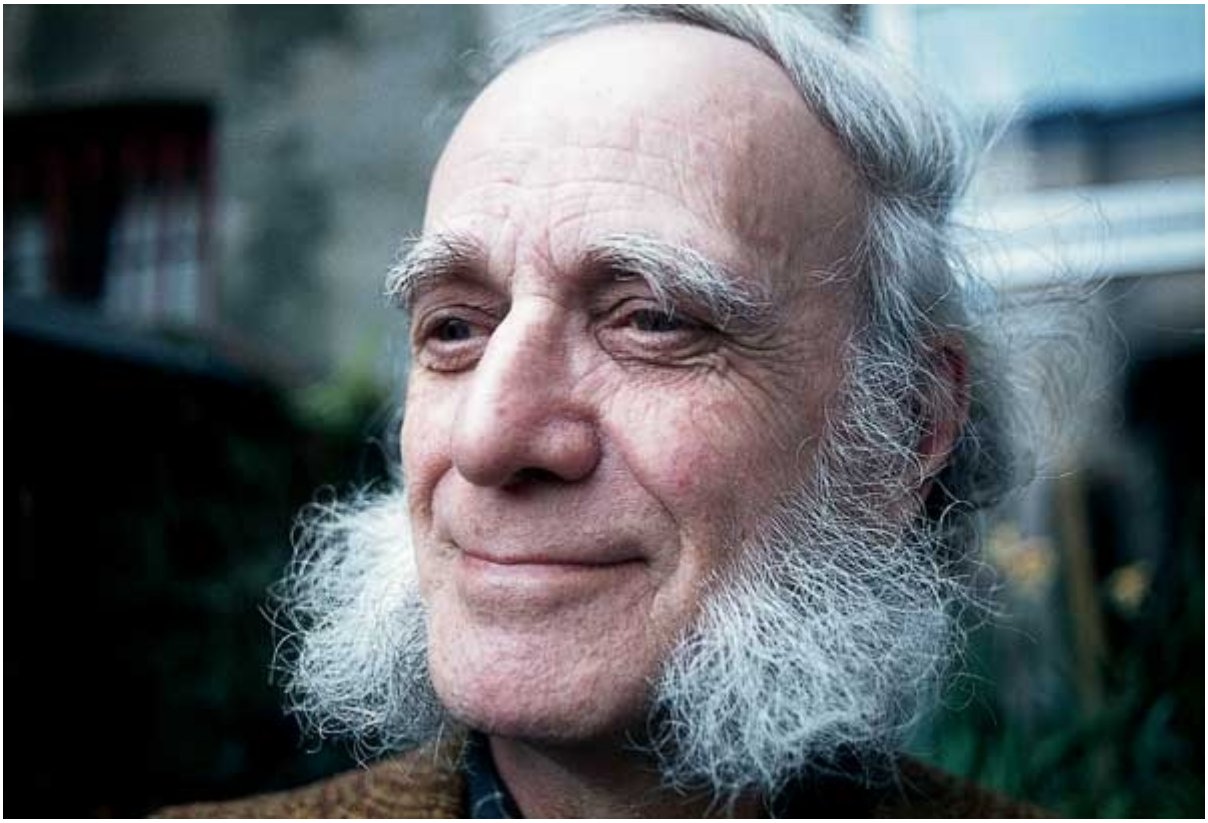
From Lady Hall go down Causey Lane to the riverbank common, and follow the track to the right until you reach the railway embankment through a gate. Continue on this track but, just short of the next gate, turn left to cross the railway by a pair of stiles. Rejoin the embankment by a further stile down to the left. Follow the embankment along and beyond Low Shaw Farm come down the farm access track, cross the inlet stream and go to join the metalled road. Green Road railway station lies just to your right. Go left on the road and turn right to rejoin the embankment to continue around the edge of the salting. The route gives an elevated view of the estuary and leads you, through bridge abutments, into Lancaster Road, Millom. Continue along Lancaster Road and the bridge over the railway by the station (6.8km).

To continue the walk from Millom station retrace your steps to the bridge abutments by the estuary. The saltmarsh provides grazing for sheep; greylag geese were reintroduced into Cumbria here. Ahead the beacon of St George's Church tower seems ever closer. Millom folk once paraded on the embankment on Sundays.

SWINSIDE STONE CIRCLE

On the Duddon estuary's west bank, high above Green Road station, lies Swinside stone circle. Known locally as Sunkenkirk and over 2000 years old, the 50 stones form a circle 30m in diameter. If you have time and energy to spare, it is well worth a visit. See your map and work out a route from Lady Hall.

The enigmatic Swinside stone circle – one of England's finest prehistoric sites



Millom poet and writer, the late Norman Nicholson

MILLOM

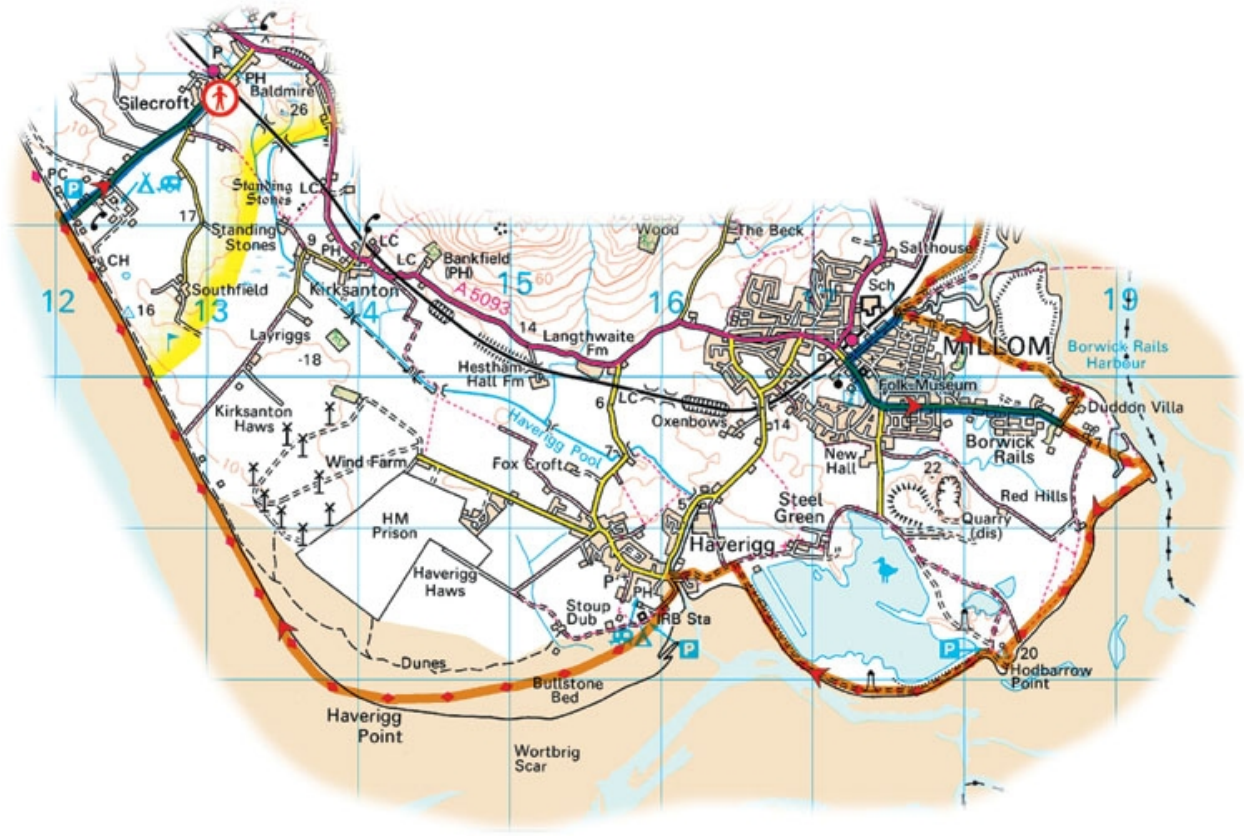
The slag banks and pigeon lofts welcome you and in many ways tell the history of Millom, a town that exists because of iron. It collapsed economically and socially when the mines and furnaces closed in 1968, but since then has fought for greater economic activity.

The original settlement was on Holborn Hill, above the railway. Those buildings below the rails are Newtown, an industrial settlement of slate-built houses constructed on former dunes, saltmarsh and swampy fields in 1866. On the outskirts of Millom Holy Trinity Church (worth a visit) can be found next to the remains of Millom Castle, now the house of a working farm.

Next to the track on the landward side of the railway lies a weatherbeaten block of sandstone whose inscription reads 'Here the Lords of Millom exercised Julia Regalia', the power of life or death over their tenants. In short, they were hanged here at their Lordship's pleasure. The stone was positioned on the landward end of the usual cross-sands route to the castle. Time and neglect have almost eaten away the inscription.

In Millom the church of St George's central tower and recessed spire is a dominant landmark. The avenue of limes leading to the church was funded by local 19th-century iron barons. A stained glass window commemorates local poet and author Norman Nicholson.

The Millom Folk Museum and TIC are located at the railway station and tell the tale of the iron industry that strongly influences the next section of the walk.



Millom to Silecroft

From the salting side of the bridge abutments at the seaward end of Lancaster Road, climb up left to the track bed of the former ironworks railway line, and continue ahead when this meets a wider track. On the left is a slag bank, whilst that to your right has been planted as part of the Millom Ironworks Local Nature Reserve, home to natterjack toad and bee orchid. Continue to reach the Duddon youth hostel, complete with blue boat. Turn right just after the building to go inshore, by the former ironworks pier, now a scrapyard, to reach the road junction. The old ironworks site is to the right (1.5km).

MILLOM IRONWORKS

Until 1968 you could see plumes of orange flame spewing into the darkness from the Millom blast furnaces at night. The works are long gone, and only slag banks, now planted, remain. The ironworks and mines shipped out their products from Borwick Rails harbour. Though the long quay is now decaying it is still an evocative sight, and served Duddon ships from the 1750s. Until around 1920 it was the setting for the local regatta. Now used for ship breaking and sometimes as a port, the quay gives wonderful views up the estuary towards Scafell and the Coniston fells.

Salthouse Pool, Millom, before its reclamation

Go left on the road, pass the waste-water treatment plant, continue through the small gate ahead and then through a kissing-gate on the left before the field corner. Cross the remains of Salthouse Pool and follow the track ahead to reach the remains and then the end of Borwick Rails quay where fine views of the estuary are obtained. Retrace your steps for a few metres to find a gap in the fence, now on your left, and then go along the seaward edge of the long field. Continue until a small wall forces you onto the foreshore, beyond which you turn half-right to follow a left-hand wall. Go through the gate facing you and up the path to pass the right-hand side of the remains of a windmill. Then go downhill, and then left to the track to follow the arc of the barrier to your left and the flooded Hodbarrow Hollow to your right to reach the iron lighthouse (3km).

HODBARROW MINES

Before their closure in 1968 these were the most productive iron ore mines in the world. The ore is found in the limestone that continues under the Duddon estuary into Furness and, geologically, links to the earlier stages of the walk. The ore deposits were discovered in 1843 by an agent of the Earl of Lonsdale, and large-scale extraction of rich 30m deposits began after he leased the rights in 1855. The old windmill served as the first company offices and are adjacent to Towsey Hole, the first mine. At the height of their prosperity these mines employed 2000 people.

The outer barrier was the third, completed in 1905, to protect the mines from the sea. The second eventually collapsed; both had permitted extension of the mines under the sea. When Hodbarrow mines closed the pumping system was switched off, allowing the mines and the hollow to flood. A metal lighthouse was built to replace the redundant stone one on the middle barrier.

The original lighthouse and the start of the barrier at Hodbarrow Point

In the late 1980s the RSPB turned most of the site into a nature reserve. Great-crested grebe, tufted duck, ringed plover, oystercatcher and little tern can be seen, whilst natterjack toad spawn nearby. Bloody cranesbill and orchids can be found in the surrounding grassland.

Continue past the iron lighthouse, turn left at the end of the embankment, and continue round the edge of the sea defences to reach the River Lazy at Haverigg. Cross the bridge, go left on the road to the front, playground and toilets, and then go up the steps and right along the top of the sea defence until it comes to an end by the first sand dune (1.6km).

From the first dune go down to the beach and follow the coast until you arrive at Silecroft. The walk will be on smooth sand accompanied by the call of seabirds, if you time your arrival for low tide. If not, you will be on leg-tiring shingle. Please avoid walking on the dunes or disturbing roosting birds, and look out for the flowers (5.9km). The invisible boundary into the Lake District National Park is crossed along this coastal stretch, also the parish boundary between the Duddon and a relatively unknown but fascinating part of Lakeland.

The River Lazy enters the sea at Haverigg

HAVERIGG

Once you round Haverigg Point – which seems so close to Barrow – you have really turned the corner to head north. Now the Irish Sea will accompany us to the Solway.

Just over the sand dunes, on a former airfield that houses Haverigg Prison, are two wind power stations, first erected in 1992. Haverigg is also the site of a prehistoric midden where archaeologists have found shells of oyster, winkle, mussel, cockle and limpet, along with a pelican's foot, showing the importance of the sea as a food source for ancient Britons.

SHINGLE BEACHES AND SAND DUNES

Loose shingle beaches are very difficult areas for plants to root in. On the higher reaches, however, you might find the yellow-horned poppy or sea holly, as well as smaller species. Turnstone and oystercatcher frequent these areas, particularly when the muddy beaches are covered by water. Washed-up crabs and other invertebrates provide food for ringed plover, whilst dunlin and turnstone feed lower down the beach.

Sand dunes are also important habitats, especially at Sandscale Haws, along the raised beaches north of Maryport, and between Allonby and Silloth. Once the sand has been stabilised by plants such as marram grass, other species can start to colonise. The resulting dunes also provide habitats for nesting birds and rare species such as the natterjack toad and orchids. These habitats can be damaged easily by trampling, so it's important to keep to the path.

SECTION III – THE LAKE DISTRICT NATIONAL PARK

Hyton Marsh Tarn, home of the natterjack toad (Stage 6)

INTRODUCTION

Stage 6

Silecroft to Muncaster and Ravenglass: 22.1km (13.5 miles)

Stage 7

Ravenglass to Seascale: 9.3km (5.7 miles)

In the last section, some 4km from Haverigg en route for Silecroft, you crossed the boundary of Millom Without and Whicham parishes and, in so doing, entered the Lake District National Park. The sea is no respecter of such boundaries and dumps its flotsam and jetsam regardless. This part of the route lies mostly within the Park, and is the fourth section the route has passed through so far – between Sampool and Grange, around Haverthwaite and Roudsea, and at Broughton-in-Furness.

Few people associate the Lake District with beaches, yet here is a fine, sandy coastline. The geology and geomorphology add to the interest. Off the coast, opposite Drigg at very low tide, you can see the remains of a forest. There are the wave-cut glacial clay cliffs of Annaside with their storm beaches below. Where the River Annas joins the sea, longshore drift maintains a fine spit. Northwards the triple estuary of the rivers Esk, Mite and Irt make an unusual setting for the ancient port of Ravenglass and provide a delightful walking area.

Transport and Accommodation

Day walkers have a supporting rail service, but this is limited and does not operate on Sundays. The following sections are suggested for day walks:

Silecroft to Ravenglass (but this is a long day)

Ravenglass to Seascale or on to St Bees Both these routes can be affected by very high tides.

The coastal railway links Millom, Silecroft, Bootle, Ravenglass, Drigg and Seascale. Silecroft and Bootle lie nearly a mile from the path. There is no Sunday service.

The following bus services can be used:

14F Muncaster–Millom (Friday only but dial before 8pm the previous evening on 01229 774995)
6/X6 Whitehaven–Seascale–Ravenglass–Muncaster

For walkers undertaking longer sections of the route Silecroft to Ravenglass is a long day and a shorter day, to Seascale, may be advisable. Stronger walkers can probably reach St Bees if the tides are not high.

Accommodation is available, but limited, in Bootle, Muncaster, Ravenglass, Holmrook (Drigg) and Seascale. Camping may be available at Ravenglass.

The relevant TICs (see Appendix I) are Broughton, Millom and Whitehaven.

The River Esk (Stage 6)

STAGE 6

Silecroft to Muncaster and Ravenglass

22.1km (13.5 miles)

SILECROFT

The centre of Silecroft, with its pub, shop and railway station, is some 1.3km inland from the seashore car park. Near the shore lies Shaw Meadow and Sea Pasture, designated an SSSI (heather and gorse coastal heath with wet habitats, including patches of orchids). Stonechat and whitethroat breed here and migrating birds find a useful autumn staging post. Traditional English seaside pastimes are the order of the day at Silecroft. In his guide to Cumbria John Parker suggests other possibilities: 'Beach pebbles are a collector's treasure-house – the varieties of stone include pink and grey granite, black and grey slate, quartz and volcanic tuffs.'

BLACK COMBE

Overshadowing this stage for much of the way is the 600m-high bulk of Black Combe, the most southwesterly Lakeland fell. This mat-grass moor is composed of ancient Skiddaw Slate. Throughout history it has served as a landmark for early settlers and mariners, and as a beacon site to warn of Scottish forays. It was the Scottish raids which gave rise to the saying that 'Now't good comes round Black Combe'. If you feel a longing to climb the fell as a diversion from the Coastal Way, an ascent from Silecroft, by way of Whicham church, provides the most direct route.

Wordsworth, in his *Guide to the Lakes*, says of the fell that 'its base covers a much greater extent than any other mountain in those parts; and, from its situation, the summit commands a more extensive view than any other point in Britain'. Scotland, the Isle of Man, Ireland, Wales and Staffordshire are all visible on a supremely clear day.

The combe of Black Combe, easily ascended from Silecroft and Whicham

Note On this stretch there is no access to the cliffs or their tops apart from a track at Gutterby Spa which runs sharp right through a break in the cliffs (4.5km).

Silecroft to Eskmeals

From Silecroft to Gutterby Spa the route lies along a sandy beach below the shingle bank, as on the stretch from Haverigg. Thus, this section has to be tackled at low tide. Annaside banks are the last clay cliffs on the stretch from Silecroft.

GUTTERBY AND ITS ENVIRONS

Birds are in constant flight over the sea. Watch for cormorant near the coast, as well as huge, synchronised flocks of waders. It is not unknown for the odd whale, seal, dolphin or porpoise to be sighted.

The cliffs leading to Gutterby and Annaside Banks reach 60m in height and are composed of compacted mud, stones and boulders, remnants from glaciation. They are very unstable, as revealed by expanses of bare earth, and with each stormy high tide the sea further cuts into them. Gutterby takes its name from one of its early Norse inhabitants, Godric. The hamlet once boasted mineral waters said to have health-giving properties. Between Gutterby and Annaside Banks is a small cove, often with rock pools at low tide, described by Norman Nicholson, in *Greater Lakeland* as 'a rare place for crabs'.

Note The section of the walk from Gutterby to Selker may change; please observe any official Lake District National Park waymark signs. Other locally made signs can be misleading. The route described is to become a definitive right of way.

At Gutterby (CCW signpost) turn right off the beach and up the lane, through the gate at the top of the slope and follow the track inland for some 50m. Go left over the stile in the railed-up gateway and follow the fence (now on your left) where you come to a fence junction and cross over the stile. Contour round the hollow of the next field (ignore a track going down to a gate and the beach) and go to where the track of the old coach road is at its lowest point. Cross the stile in the new fence then follow the track up parallel to the clifftops and continue, via a gate and stile, by the right-hand fence along the top of Annaside Banks (1.8km). On the next section the spectacular Lakeland fells of Pillar, Great Gable and Scafells come into view, as do the cliffs of St Bees Head.

When the track begins to descend and turn inland by the fourth gate (the Annaside farms come into view) cross the stile to the left of the gate. Go down the middle of the field, over another stile, and left down a sunken lane to the shore (500m).

Go right, along the shore, and after 100m go through the gate at right angles to the beach and into the field. Go near to the left-hand fence, pass through the gate ahead, then keep near the left-hand fence to cross the gated bridge over the River Annas. Follow the right of way along the right-hand side of Hyton Marsh Tarn and continue parallel to the right-hand fence, to cross over a stile by a small gate (a 'slip heck'). Climb the diagonally ascending path up the gorse-covered bank to a gate to enter a field. Follow the left-hand fence, cross a stile by a gate, near Selker Farm, and then head to pass through the gate on the left-hand side of the farm buildings (2.25km).

ANNASIDE

The name Annaside is derived from ‘Einarr’s saetre’ (‘summer pasture’) and one can imagine Einarr bringing his flock down from the Black Combe ridge to graze on the salting in the winter. Life has not always been so peaceful. The cobblestones from Annaside beach were much sought after in the 19th century. Their large-scale removal caused coastal erosion and even led to violence. A local paper gave this stirring report of the Battle of Annaside, which took place on the morning of Saturday 18 August, 1838:

The River Annas by the route

'Wilson, a Ravenglass innkeeper, led three boats and a number of Ravenglass inhabitants to load cobbles from the beach at Annaside for Runcorn and Liverpool. The consequences of this practice was the sea making inroads into the parish and considerable expenditure to stop it.

'With peaceful methods having failed, some three dozen men from Annaside, Bootle and Whitbeck, each carrying a "good sprig of oak", came to meet Wilson and his male and female followers who had been driven away the day before. Wilson had brought reinforcements and arms (spars and bludgeons) and so incensed the local men to arms.'

The paper then describes the battle: 'A most desperate fight ensued, the women pouring volleys of stones, in addition to the noise they made. In the thick of the fight Wilson signalled himself by a desperate attempt to give a finisher to Mr Parker with the formidable weapon [a large pump handle], but this circumstance attracted notice, and his sconce was made to crack open again by the repeated blows inflicted upon it by the oaken weapons of his antagonists.'

This ended the battle, without the loss of life, but with 'broken heads and bruised bodies'. Some were carried home to be confined to bed 'in a dangerous state'. 'On the turn of the tide the vessels returned to Ravenglass and the language of the women was said to be frightful.'

HYTON MARSH SSSI

Where the River Annas bends north to run parallel to the shore before entering the sea is Hyton Marsh SSSI, a natterjack toad habitat. This narrow strip of land between the sea and river shows the transition from coastal shingle and sand dunes through to dune grassland and semi-improved grassland.

This is a 'barrier spit' caused by coastal drift, the natural movement of stones and sediment along the coast. The River Annas once joined the Irish Sea perhaps over 1km south of its present location, but due to deposition and longshore drift the mouth has gradually moved northwards.

Tarn Bay, with a view of the Lakeland fells above Wasdale

Follow the access track from Selker Farm to a gate and cattle grid. Bear right by the barn and the track now bears right to go inland towards Bootle railway station. Leave the track when nearest the beach (by a redundant left-hand stile) and follow the edges of the stony coast and after the hill the edge of the fields, where stiles have been provided. The field edge to the shore takes you most of the way to reach the metalled road, near the southern end of the experimental ammunition-proving establishment at Eskmeals. Sections of beach are rough under foot, and winter storms rapidly erode further sections of nearby fields. This section becomes flooded at high tides. **Note** Dogs must be on a lead (2.5km).

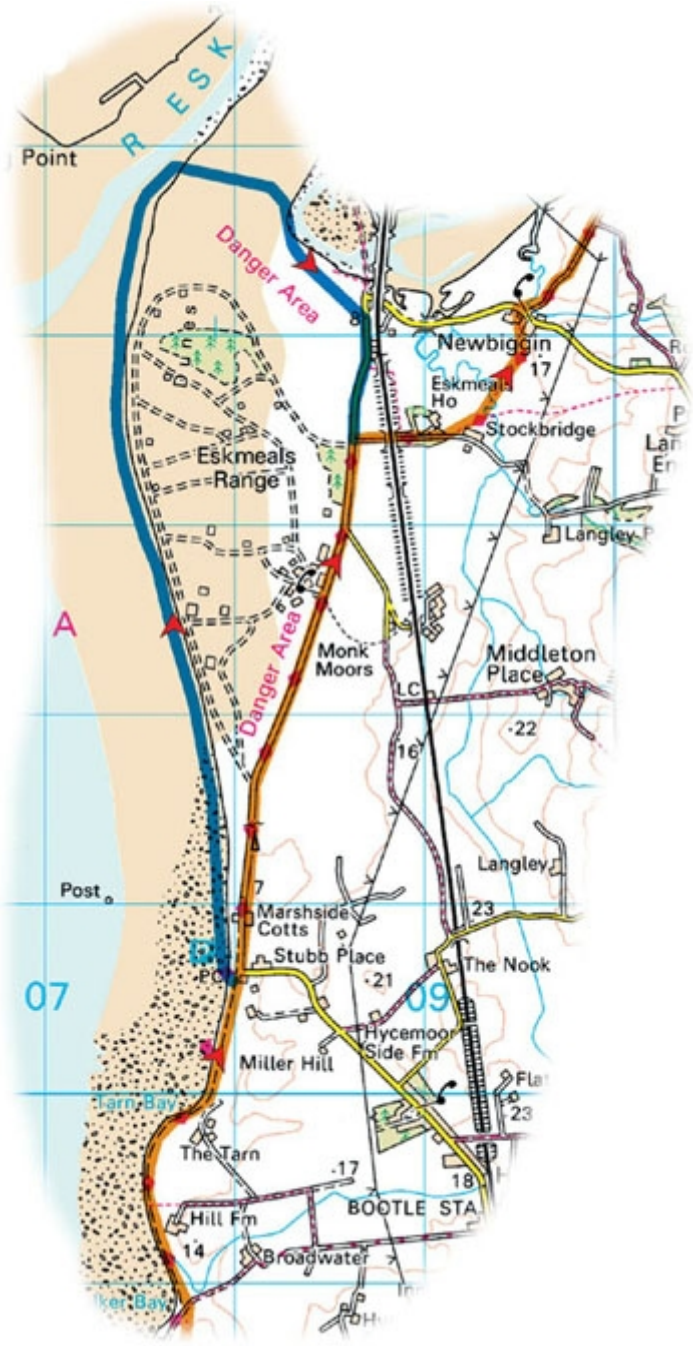
BOOTLE

Bootle derives its name from Bothill, meaning 'beacon hill' (a reference to Black Combe). Once part of the great lordship of Millom, Bootle was granted a charter in 1347 for a Wednesday market, but the village never really succeeded in becoming a prosperous market town.

Eskmeals to Waberthwaite

There are **two alternative routes** here.

The first route is only available when the test-firing ranges at Eskmeals are not being used (the red flags are not flying – usually at weekends and Bank Holidays) and is only suitable at low tide. Follow the sandy beach along from the road and then, after the fells come into view and the way goes towards the estuary of the Esk, walk until you are opposite Drigg Point over the river mouth. Turn right near the 'seldom seen' observation hut to cross the edge of the dunes by a path through the Cumbria Wildlife Reserve that initially follows a right-hand fence of the testing ranges. Go down to the estuary side, heading for the viaduct, go to the road, turn right and follow the road until a track goes off left and with the edge of the wooded area and a sentry box to your right (6.3km). This is where the two routes rejoin.



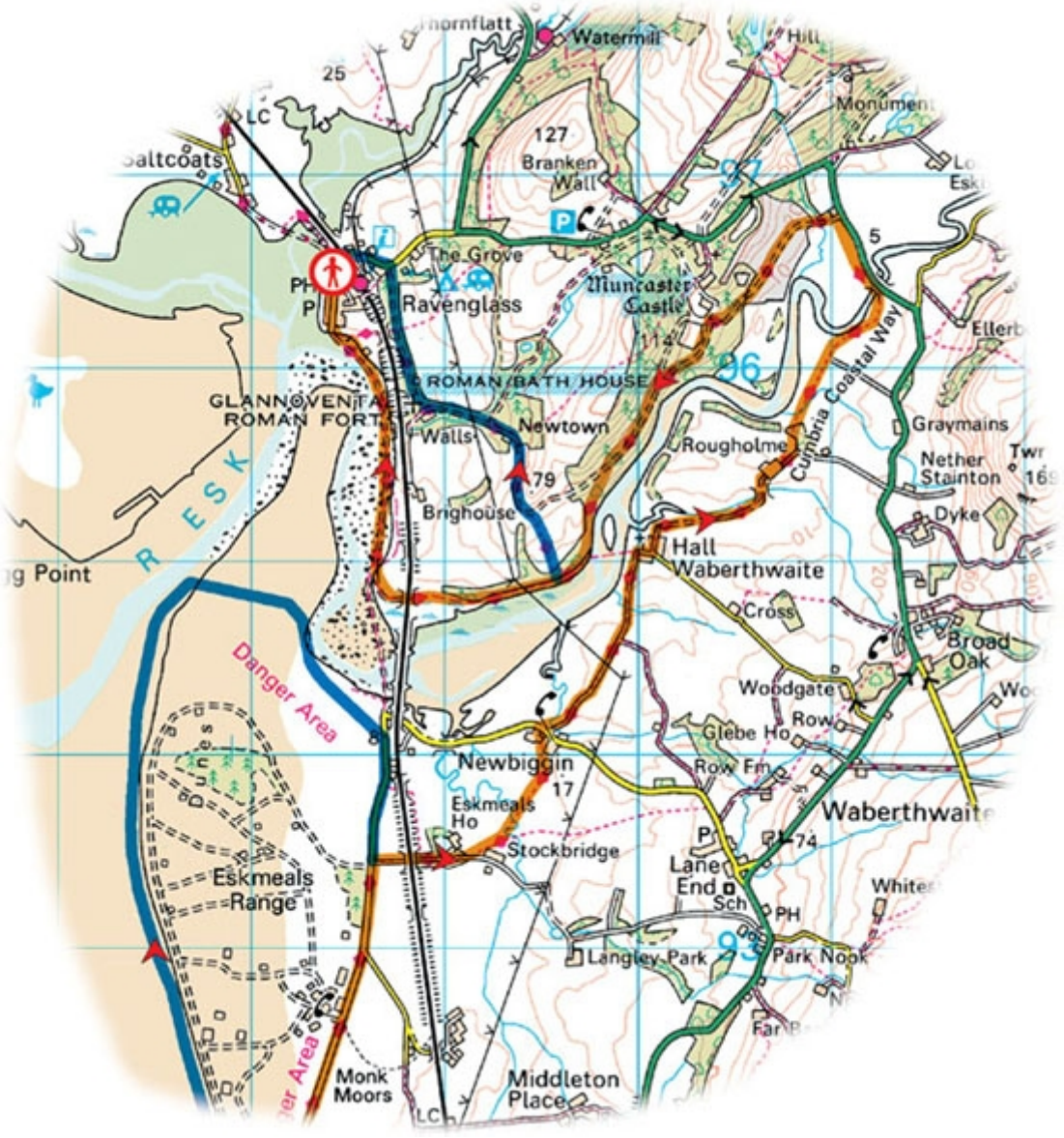
The more direct route follows the road north, past the tower of Eskmeals proof and experimental establishment and its main gate. Continue along the road to pass a right-hand turning at an acute angle. Shortly after this the wooded area on your left give way to fields and a sentry box (3km).

Note If you had continued along the road past this turning point, or taken the beach route, you would have come to Eskmeals viaduct where the railway crosses the estuarine River Esk. The dunes to the west force the Esk north to join the other rivers at Ravenglass. The Esk here, at low tide and moderate river flow, is a relatively hard ford to the west of the railway viaduct. This old cart ford has warning notices and depth markers.

DRIGG COAST SSSI

With the estuary, the dunes form the southern part of the Drigg Coast SSSI. The area has a rich variety of maritime habitats and contains the most extensive sand-dune system in Cumbria. Artefacts of Neolithic and early Bronze Age date have been found, including arrowheads, worked flints, and saddle querns for grinding corn. The Neolithic settlers, who were agriculturists, came here around 3000BC. Drigg Coast was one of their major sites and stoneworking was carried out at Walney, Eskmeals and Drigg dunes. A settlement from this period was also found at Ehenside Tarn, north of Sellafield. Some of the tools came from sites high in the Lakeland fells, such as the Langdale stone axe factory. The implements were then polished, using the sandstone rocks found on parts of the coast. These people built stone circles similar to the example at Swinside.

Drigg Coast SSSI provides good examples of different types of sand dune. The yellow dunes by the sea consist of highly mobile sand. As you move inshore the dunes become more stable due to colonisation by marram and lyme grasses.



Eskmeals viaduct, near where the River Esk enters the sea

In the depressions between the dunes are wet hollows, or slacks, rich in flora and providing suitable habitat for the natterjack toad. These dunes were once extensive with managed rabbit warrens. The Cumbria Wildlife Trust manages the Drigg Coast SSSI as a nature reserve at Eskmeals; contact the Trust prior to entering the site.

Note The tide sometimes (mostly at high springs) covers the path between here and Ravenglass. Tide tables and advisory

notices are positioned in tidal sections of path near the Esk.

Leave the road to go right down a track (towards Eskmeals House), under the railway. Continue down the drive to pass the first large house on your left, Eskmeals House. Immediately after the house and walled garden leave the track through a kissing-gate to your left. Enter the field and turn right to aim for the next kissing-gate just up from the right-hand field corner. Go through the gate, over the stile facing you, and then cross the footbridge. Keep by the left-hand fence in the next field and then bear left to recross the stream. Over the stream turn immediately right and follow near the right-hand fence to go through a kissing-gate by a gate. Then follow the left-hand hedge, pass through another kissing-gate by a gate, and follow the right-hand fence to a stile in the right-hand field corner. Cross this and follow the enclosed path to a further stile. Here you reach the road at Newbiggin (1.3km).

Go straight across the road and over a footbridge. Beyond the bridge, follow the enclosed track. Go through the second of two adjacent gates on your left and follow an enclosed track branching off your present enclosed lane. Ignore any side branches, and follow the track through a gate and down to the saltmarsh. Continue by the right-hand hedge to emerge, through a gate, by Hall Waberthwaite church (1.2km).

WABERTHWAITE

The name Waberthwaite comes from the Norse and means ‘the fishing or hunting bothy in the forest clearing’. At Hall Waberthwaite maps show a right of way crossing the tidal Esk by way of a ford, a crossing said to have originated with the Romans. It was used by the priest of Muncaster on his way to preach at the daughter chapel of St John the Baptist.

This church is worth a visit in any season, though the graveyard is at its most resplendent at wild daffodil and crocus time. The basic structure is a simple oblong, without chancel or apse and, apart from the 14th-century windows and west window stonework, it is still essentially Norman. Inside are square box pews, and the décor is plain and practical. The font is possibly Norman – a square red sandstone block of early workmanship. The oak pulpit was carved in 1630 and bears a Latin inscription that translates as ‘Woe is me if I preach not the truth’.

Hall Waberthwaite church

The churchyard contains several old tombstones, and at least one burial, in 1678, took place during the wool glut when bodies had to be wrapped in sheep’s wool instead of being placed in a coffin. There is a cross shaft dating from the 7th–10th centuries. Next to it is a smaller fragment of another cross shaft, possibly 10th century, with a foliated vine scroll on the edges. These crosses are attributed to Northumbrian settlers.

Waberthwaite to Muncaster

Take the track to the right of the church and go down, past the buildings, to a gate and into a field. Turn right down the wet track and through the kissing-gate by a gate in the far left-hand field corner. Continue along the track by the right-hand boundary but then head towards the farm buildings to reach a stile and bridge in the far left-hand corner of the field. Over the bridge, climb up the track to the farmyard, pass through the gated yard of Roughholme and follow the farm access track until it bends sharply right (1km).

Go left through a gate to go down an enclosed track, cross the stile by the gate, drop down through the trees, mostly on a boardwalk, and cross a further stile. Drop down a short slope and enter the salting by a stone footbridge. Bear right on the

salting, and, parallel to the River Esk, go to cross the stile halfway along the fence that runs across your path. With Scafell directly ahead, go towards the right-hand fence corner of the next field and then continue at the same angle over reedy ground to meet the fence again by a gate and stile next to the river. In the last field follow the right-hand boundary to a footbridge, then go straight ahead to reach the road by a stile adjacent to a gate. Turn left to Muncaster Bridge (1.1km).

The road bridge over the River Esk

BOOTLE AND THWAITE FELLS

Above Waberthwaite are Bootle and Thwaite fells, with cairnfields that date back to Bronze Age times, and the prehistoric settlement of Barnscar below Devoke Water. The pepperpot-style beacon seen above the first line of crags was used to guide shipping into the tricky estuarine harbour at Ravenglass.

Continue, with great care, along the road, from the bridge, turn left at Hirst Lodge and follow the track through the wood. Pass through the kissing-gate, continue along the track through a large field and, after the track goes towards a gate marked private, bear left to continue near the right-hand fence to pass through a further kissing-gate to enter the wood. Continue along the path through the wood, but never too far from the river. **Note** This is a section where dogs must be kept on a lead. From the path junction continue along the main track through the woods, including Heronry Wood, keeping left at main track junctions to reach the riverside promenade. The needs of nesting birds may sometimes necessitate diversions. When nearly opposite Hall Waberthwaite church on the opposite shore the track goes away from the river but at a prominent signboard, with tide tables, turn left to pass through a gate and reach the salting. If it is high tide continue along the track and turn right to reach a kissing-gate by a gate. This path goes directly up the field and contours round the edge of Newton Knott. It then joins the road through Newton Farm and reaches Ravenglass by way of Walls Castle, the Roman bathhouse (3km).

MUNCASTER CASTLE

You can visit Muncaster castle, church and the owl centre, along with other tourist attractions in the grounds. Perched on the bluff above the River Esk, with fine views along Eskdale towards the Scafells, Muncaster Castle's romantic situation suits this largely Victorian edifice. A fee is payable if you visit the castle or grounds. The grounds are open most days (except Friday) from 12–5pm, and the castle on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Sunday from 2–5pm, Easter–October.

St Michael's Church was the mother church of Hall Waberthwaite. It is a typical dale church, its low lines and bellcote reflecting a farming parish very much tied to the castle. However the castle architect, Anthony Salvin, added to the building in 1874 and gave the interior an air of a Victorian high church. Outside the churchyard there is a cross shaft (possibly 11th century) displaying a pattern of broad, flat but defaced plaiting.

Muncaster Castle, a stately home with other tourist attractions

In the gardens the Terrace Walk is of particular interest and, during rhododendron time, provides a major attraction. There is access to about 14ha of gardens and the remainder of the estate has a network of public footpaths. Not too far from the gardens is Muncaster Fell, which gives extensive views of this part of Lakeland.

The castle was the home of the Penningtons who came to Ravenglass as Lords of the Manor in the 12th century and may have used Walls Castle as their dwelling until the pele tower (now part of the present castle) was constructed in 1325. Designed as a refuge from Scottish raiders, the walls of the tower are 2.5m thick and it contained a spiral staircase.

In 1461, after his defeat by Yorkists in the Battle of Towton, King Henry IV was found wandering in the estate and took shelter in the castle. A tower, seen from the castle, now marks the spot where a shepherd found him. To honour his hosts the king gave them a curious bowl of greenish glass that is still preserved in the castle and is known as the 'Luck of Muncaster'. It is said that the Pennington line will prosper as long as the bowl remains intact. The king's bedstead and a portrait of him with the 'Luck' can be seen in the castle.

If you don't want to visit the castle stay on the public footpath or official coast path across the grounds.

At other than high tide follow the right-hand side of the salting and go under the railway bridge north of the viaduct. Continue ahead and then bear right to follow the edge of the estuary towards Ravenglass. The ancient salmon garth in the Esk, still eligible for a licence for use as a salmon trap, is seen on the way. Turn right at the ramped track to pass under the railway, go left along the track to pass Walls Castle and the site of the Roman fort. Either continue along this track or, at low water, go down left under the next railway bridge to the shore, or continue along to the roadway into Ravenglass. Continue through the village to the railway station (3.3km).

WALLS CASTLE

Walls Castle is the remains of a Roman bathhouse where two rooms still stand almost to full height and retain some original plaster. It is the tallest Roman building in the north of England. That the damaged arches and overhanging walls still stand is testimony to the Roman knowledge of concrete (that was lost for many centuries). Nicholas Pevsner describes the building thus: 'The actual walls, built of a coursed red sandstone and rendered internally with pink mortar, stand to a height of 4m. Two doorways survive, each with a shallow relieving arch above the wooden lintel, and there are traces of five splayed windows. The wall of one of the rooms, possibly the entrance hall, contains a round-headed niche, semi-circular in plan.' The niche possibly held a sculpture of a Roman god.

Walls has been linked with the Celts and King Arthur as 'Lyons Garde' or Castle Perilous, the home of King Eveling, or Avalloch, the Celtic Lord of the Underworld. The bathhouse is near the site of a Roman fort that was damaged by the construction of the railway and more recent forestry. The bathhouse is a detatched part of Hadrian's Wall World Heritage Site.

RAVENGLASS

It's worth setting aside some time to explore Ravenglass, which overlooks the confluence of the three rivers emerging from Eskdale, Mitredale and Wasdale: the Esk, the Mite and the Irt.

The Romans established the port of Glannaventa here to provide a supply base for inland forts, northern defences and

possible conquests of western Scotland or Ireland, as well as a place of commerce.

Ravenglass, where three rivers meet to enter the sea

The port has enjoyed other colourful times. Writing in the early years of this century, A.G. Bradley commented: 'No doubt, every soul inhabiting the double row of queer old-fashioned tenements is usefully and worthily employed, in some way or other, but not, I take it, after the manner of their predecessors, for smuggling is writ large all over Ravenglass, and it has a delightfully wicked appearance, though it does nothing, I believe, more reckless nowadays than gather mussels.'

LA'AL RATTY

The major attraction in the area is the Ravenglass and Eskdale Narrow Gauge Railway. It is affectionately known as 'La'al Ratty', supposedly after Mr Ratcliffe, the building contractor for the Whitehaven Mining Company who operated the Boot, Eskdale, iron ore mines. The first ore train on the 3ft-gauge railway ran on 24 May 1875, and soon after began to carry passengers.

The mines ceased operating in 1912, and in 1915 the line was acquired for a narrow-gauge railway. A 15 in track was laid and was used to transport Eskdale granite. The narrow-gauge steam and diesel trains today operate a regular passenger service from Ravenglass, up by the River Mite and then over into Eskdale. The views are excellent and it's a good ramble from Eskdale Green station over Muncaster Fell back to Ravenglass.

STAGE 7
Ravenglass to Seascale
9.3km (5.7 miles)

Ravenglass to Drigg

From the inland end of Main Street, Ravenglass, cross the River Mite by the footbridge alongside the railway viaduct. It is possible, but not advised, to use the muddy ford at low tide. Continue along the shore-side track, pass through Saltcotes and bear right at the junction of the metalled roads. **Note** During very high tides the path to the farm can be flooded (750m).

Continue on the road, cross the railway by the level crossing, until you reach the track to Mite House on your right. Turn left off the metalled road down a straight, enclosed, pleasant green lane. At the end of the lane (gated) turn right on the metalled road with views towards the Wasdale fells. When this road bends right leave by the track on the left. Follow this meandering enclosed track, over the stile in the fence across your way, and go directly ahead along the left-hand boundary to cross a further stile in the field corner (1.8km).

Cross this field, passing an overhead wire pole, and, with the river down to your left, follow the top of the wooded bluff along by the right-hand hedge, then descend some steep steps and cross the River Irt by the attractive Holme Bridge (150m).

THE RIVER IRT

After draining England's deepest lake and highest fell, the River Irt appears a somewhat tame stream. The Irt harbours the mussel *Margaritifera margaritifera*, black river mussels, once fished on account of their pearls. The locals may have sold pearls to the Romans. In 1777 it is recorded that London pearl dealers paid £800 to local fishermen for pearls. The Elizabethan historian Camden uses the phrase 'fair as Irton pearls'.

The pearl beds were largely exhausted during the 18th century but small seed pearls were still being collected during World War II. The pearlers used glass-bottomed drums when searching for the host mussels. The River Ehen, crossed later, also has the mussel. Crossing Holme Bridge takes us out of the National Park.

Over the bridge, go up the field (Drigg Holme), staying parallel to the overhead wires and the left-hand hedge. When the hedge bends left continue towards the pylon ahead and then go left to the field corner to meet an enclosed track that leads into Drigg. Turn left on the road at the end of the track (800m).

A 'La'al Ratty' engine, which runs by the River Mite

DRIGG

Drigg Holme is the former common field dating from medieval times where the tenant farmers used the run-rig system. This ensured every farmer, in his annual holding, had a fair share of each soil type. In this area the soil consists chiefly of sand with varying mixtures of loam. Local seaweed, 'tangle', would have been used as a source of green manure, a common coastal practice. The field is now a designated SSSI and is noted for its flowers.

St Peter's Church, Drigg, was built in 1850 of local red sandstone. It is a simple but solid dale chapel. The following comment is inscribed on a tomb in the churchyard (many of which are older than the church):

Spectators all as you pass by,

As you are now, so once was I,

But as I am, so you must be.

Prepare for Death and follow me.

Shipwrecks were not uncommon on this coast in earlier times and the locals, even the churchgoers, appeared more interested in looting the vessels than helping the survivors. A local story is that a parson of Drigg, who was conducting a service one stormy Sunday, left instructions that the west door of the church be left open so that he might see when the vessel in distress off the coast was washed ashore. His parishioners were keenly interested and had two advantages over the

parson – they were not encumbered with surplices and were nearer to the door. When the ship struck land there was a general rush from the congregation as the parson implored: 'Nay, nay, lads; let us have fair play.'

Drigg Hall, near the church, is late Georgian and, unusually in this area, partially constructed of brick.

Follow the road through the village, turn left at the junction, go past the station (there is a café here) and down the shore road. Follow the road down to the coast (2.8km). The road to the coast sweeps round trees screening the site of a wartime explosives factory, now a low-level radioactive materials dump. Contaminated materials are stored in shallow trenches here.

DRIGG DUNES SSSI

Drigg Dunes lie south of here and stretch back to the estuary at Ravenglass, forming a major portion of the Drigg Coast SSSI. A track goes down to the Drigg Local Nature Reserve, established in 1954 and managed by the National Park Authority. The site has over 250 flowering plants and 11 mammal, 10 dragonfly, 20 butterfly, 6 amphibian and 3 reptile species.

Offshore are the remains of a considerable peat deposit and a submarine forest. These can be seen at very low tide, and blocks of peat may be washed up along the shore. Prehistoric activity is indicated by finds of Neolithic arrowheads, and Beaker folk burial sites have been discovered nearby. On the maps you will see Kokoarrah marked, a boulder scar that marks the National Park boundary.

Carline Thistle

The large boulder just off the coast is known as Carl Crag. Legend has it that it was dropped by the Devil in an unsuccessful attempt to build a bridge to the Isle of Man. The Isle of Man is closest to the English coast at this point.

OS maps mark this part of the coast with red danger symbols; sea currents may wash up unexploded munitions from the Eskmeals testing site.

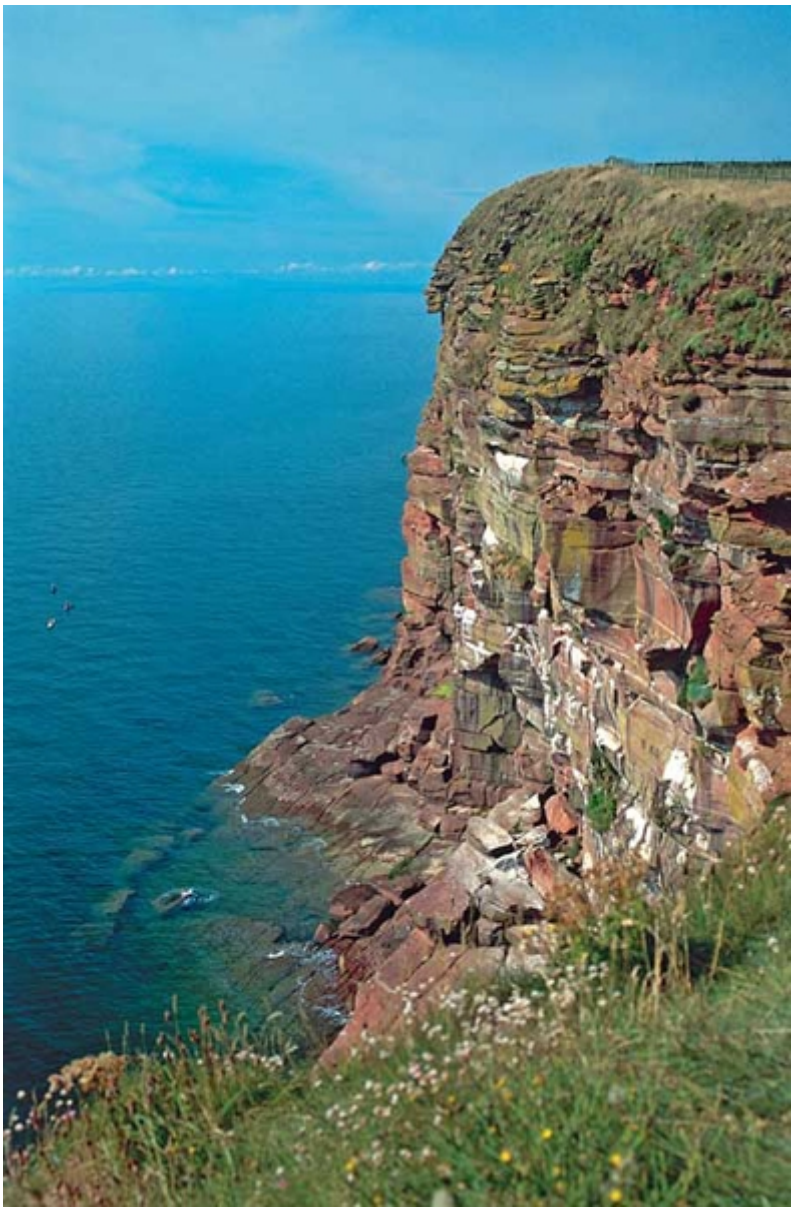
Drigg to Seascale

You can, at low tide, turn right along the shoreline all the way to Seascale. Alternately, if the tide is in, turn off the road through the gate at the nearside of the black hut and follow the path through the dunes, with much floral interest. This path goes some distance above the shore but, when a track comes down from the landward side, it is easier to follow the beach. This area is largely open access land but care is needed if wildlife is not to be jeopardised (3km).

SEASCALE

Seascale – 'the hut by the sea' – marks the end of this section. Baddeley, the doyen of Victorian Lake District guidebook writers, describes this small seaside town and sandy beach as 'the best headquarters on the west coast'. The giant complex of Sellafield didn't overshadow the town in those days, nor was the air of neglect so prevalent. Seascale was planned as a resort for the Furness Railway. It was to be a second Eastbourne, a setting for the Victorian family seaside holiday that was the fashion of the day. But the predicted demand failed to materialise and only a small fraction of the development, to the north of the station, was completed.

SECTION IV – THE WEST CUMBRIAN COAST



St Bees Heads looking north (Stage 9)

INTRODUCTION

Stage 8

Seascale to St Bees: 13.8km (8.2 miles)

Stage 9 St Bees to Whitehaven: 11km (6.5 miles)

Stage 10

Whitehaven to Workington: 12.5km (7.6 miles)

Stage 11

Workington to Maryport: 9.8km (6 miles)

The West Cumbrian coast is a place where men, women and children have toiled to exploit the riches of the earth. Because jobs have been hard to come by they have often been created at great cost to the environment. The Lake District and the Cumbria coast have a long industrial history, based on abundant natural resources but, except for the shipping trade, had few accessible markets. The local economy received a boost with the building of the railways, bringing more distant markets within reach.

Following the Norman colonisation of the county and the early exploitation of resources – water power, woodlands (including charcoal manufacture), iron ore, minerals and coal – industrial development continued through the Middle Ages under the auspices of the wealthy monasteries. In the 17th and 18th centuries local landed families played their part in developing the area, but it was the Victorian industrial revolution that had the most lasting impact. Coal, iron ore and transport became increasingly important to the local economy and these industries largely shaped the landscape of the West

Cumbrian coast, leaving a valuable industrial legacy (which is disappearing today).

Whitehaven harbour (Stage 9)

It is also an area of scenic delights and plentiful wildlife. Inland from St Bees and Whitehaven lie the rugged central Lakeland fells, including England's highest peak, Scafell Pike. The towering fells resulted from undersea volcanoes that spewed out lava and ash to produce rocks classified as the Borrowdale Volcanic Group. After the deposition of Carboniferous Limestone a huge upheaval forced the rocks up into a central dome. During the warm, arid desert conditions that followed, the limestone capping was removed and sands were deposited in the surrounding basins, consolidating to form St Bees Sandstone. This red-coloured rock, used in local buildings, is best seen in the dramatic cliffs at St Bees Heads.

Transport and Accommodation

For **day walkers** St Bees to Whitehaven, Whitehaven to Workington, and Workington to Maryport make three ample days. However, for those who seek **longer walks** the Whitehaven to Maryport section can be readily accomplished in a day. The same breakdown applies for those walking the whole route. There are no trains between St Bees and Whitehaven on a Sunday, and the Whitehaven to Maryport line has a very limited service on a Sunday.

The coastal railway serves the route well with stations at Seascale, Sellafield, Braystones, Nethertown, St Bees, Whitehaven, Parton, Harrington, Workington, Flimby and Maryport. There are no Sunday trains south of Whitehaven.

The following bus routes also link with the path, and there are town routes in Whitehaven, Workington and Maryport:

1 Kells–Whitehaven–Lowca
6/X6 Whitehaven–Silecroft–Ravenglass–Muncaster
20 Whitehaven–St Bees (not Sunday)
30B Whitehaven–Workington–Maryport
300/301 Carlisle–Maryport–Workington – Whitehaven
836 Egremont–Nethertown–Coulderton–Egremont (not Sunday)

Accommodation can be found in Whitehaven, Workington and Maryport, but there is little opportunity to camp between St Bees and Allonby in Stages 9, 10 and 11.

The relevant TICs (see Appendix I) are at Whitehaven, Workington and Maryport.

STAGE 8

Seascale to St Bees

13.8km (8.2 miles)

Seascale to Sellafield

From Seascale station follow the path on the shoreward side of the railway until the River Calder joins the River Ehen and enters the sea. Go under the railway bridge, cross the bridge over the Calder and continue alongside the railway to Sellafield station (3km).

CALDER HALL, WINDSCALE, SELLAFIELD . . .

The River Ehen, from Ennerdale, joins the River Calder only a few metres short of where they plunge together over the shingle beach into the Irish Sea. Longshore drift, south from St Bees Head, has moved the river mouth south of its original position and created a spit.

During the war the Sellafield site was a munitions factory; since then the eyes of the world have focused on it. It is curious how the PR men have used different names for trhe site to alter public perception: originally Sellafield, then Calder Hall, then Windscale, and now back to Sellafield.

In 1956 the Queen opened the world's first commercial nuclear reactor, Calder Hall; it closed in April 2003. A domed-shaped building on the Windscale site was the pioneer advanced gas-cooled reactor which was commissioned in February 1963. It served as a research reactor, whilst delivering some 3.7 billion kilowatt hours of electricity to the National Grid, before it was switched off in April 1981. This site is now decommissioned.

Sellafield, formerly Windscale, is the site of Britain's nuclear-fuel-reprocessing facility, the controversial THORP plant. Plutonium is also extracted, resulting in some radioactive discharges into the Irish Sea and the atmosphere. Mixed oxide fuel (uranium and plutonium) is a controversial product. The site is now owned and partly cleared by the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority.

There is an impressive free exhibition in the visitor centre and conducted coach tours around the massive site.

Grey Croft stone circle and the setting of Sellafield nuclear power plant

Sellafield to St Bees

From the station entrance continue north alongside the railway and when the road goes left to a level crossing continue straight ahead over a stile. Walk forward, go under the pipe-bridge, and then turn right to climb the slope. Follow the right-hand hilltop fence parallel to the railway. Continue by the fence until the slope ends. Go downhill on an enclosed path and then bear left down some steps aiming for the left-hand side of the bridge over the River Ehen. Cross a stile and an old railway track bed, and via a further stile gain the path over the railway bridge across the River Ehen (1km).

On the far bank go down from the bridge, turn right to pass under the railway arch, then turn right to walk along the flower-speckled raised beach. Continue initially near the railway line and then by the edge of the beach, using either the rough track that links the chalets or lower down on the sandy beach. Go along to reach Braystones station (2.5km).

BEACH HUTS AND BUNGALOWS

The stretch from Sellafield to St Bees is best walked at low tide. To the west you can see the Isle of Man. Look out for semi-precious stones and birdlife on the quieter sections away from the beach huts. The next few miles can often be quite tough walking. Some of the chalets look rather neglected, but many are much loved and have been rebuilt as bungalows. These may be eyesores – as is the huge caravan site just over the railway – but for their owners they are a haven, a breathing space.

Continue along from Braystones station. When you see a bridge over the railway the way over the foreshore becomes much stonier as it rounds a point of land to reach Nethertown station (2.8km).

The seaward side of Sellafield nuclear power plant

There is **an alternative route** from the railway bridge to Nethertown village and back to the sea by way of the railway station. Go up the track that crosses the bridge across the railway. Continue along this track into Nethertown. Turn left at the first road junction, and when the road bears right, go left by the old Sunday School down a track (footpath signed to Nethertown station). Pass the last bungalow, continue round the bend to the right, cross the stile at the end and a further stile facing it. Turn left to follow the fence where another stile gives you a view back to the coast. Descend to the station and go to the far end of the platform. Turn right to follow the track under the railway and onto the shore. Turn right along the shore. This route avoids some stony beach walking but adds some 400m to your route.

From Nethertown station continue along the stony beach – walking is made more difficult by the railway sea defence work. Some relief is gained on the track linking the Coulderton 'huts'. A concrete revetment can be walked along the

narrow bottom ledge but the surrounding large limestone blocks can be tricky. Just after the revetment the railway turns inland and round the next corner you gain access to a car park beyond the first of St Bees' 'huts' at Sea Mill Beck. Cross the bridge. The Way goes ahead on the edge of the eroding clay sea cliffs (with the golf course to your right) to reach the rear of the Seacote Hotel and then the promenade and green on the sea front (4.5km).

Just after crossing Sea Mill Beck a stile right leads to a footpath back under the railway, on Sea Mill Lane, then left along Main Street, to St Bees station and village centre.

ST BEES

As the huge car park and caravan site indicate, St Bees is a popular summer holiday resort. The greater part of the settlement lies away from the sea, in the lea of the coastal drumlins and near Pow Beck. There are some attractive older houses above the railway station, including early Elizabethan examples (such as 19–20 Finkle Street). They are constructed of St Bees sandstone, a much sought-after gritty building material.

The name St Bees is derived from that of an Irish saint, Bega, who was supposed to have founded a nunnery here in AD650. There is little evidence to support this story but it is still an interesting legend. According to tradition, Bega was an Irish princess who fled her home-land to escape an unwanted marriage to a heathen Viking. She came ashore at the site where St Bees now stands (where England is closest to Ireland). This relatively sheltered bay, marked by St Bees Head to the north (which can be seen from the Isle of Man), was a major Viking landing point in Cumbria.

Bega reputedly asked the local landowner, the Lord of Egremont, for lands on which to build her nunnery. His Lordship, with splendid Christian charity, offered her all the lands covered by snow on midsummer's day. There was said to be an extensive snowfall that year.

ST BEES CHURCH

Whatever the real story it is known that a Benedictine priory, dedicated to St Bega, was founded by a Norman Baron of Copeland. Parts of the building have been dated to around 1150. The priory prospered, acquiring lands in the Lake District dales, interests in local iron-ore mines, salt pans and stone quarries (one provided stone for St George's Chapel, Windsor), and land around Whitehaven and on the Isle of Man. Small coal bell pits discovered locally are attributed to this period. St Bega's Priory, a daughter cell of St Mary's Abbey of York, grew to be the richest in Cumberland but Scottish raids, coupled with local conflicts and rivalries, hindered its full economic potential.

Today it still retains some of its Norman stonework, the finest part being the west doorway (dated about 1150). Nikolaus Pevsner described the doorway as 'the richest in the county, of the three columns, with scroll capitals including figure-work and much zigzag and also some sparse beak head inside the arch'. The beak heads are of men and serpents, and a figure swinging like a monkey is carved on one of the capitals. The lintel opposite the west door, showing St Michael fighting the dragon among curious early knots and frets, is said to have come from a chapel of St Michael at nearby Rottington.

The interior is lofty and spacious with a modern nave roof above the arcade of six bays. A windowless wall carved with tracery shuts off most of the chancel. The plain windows in the south transept are also Norman, as is the crossing. The crossing tower has been restored in English style, and the nave has some similar work. The screen was made of wrought iron in 1886. A more modern and touching monument is to a child of four; the little figure lies asleep on a tomb under a recess, a spray of lilies in her hand.

Outside in the churchyard are two fragmentary cross shafts, one with interlace, the other with untidy spirals and scrolls. Some of the tombstones are over 800 years old and carved with crosses, swords and shears. A particularly fine example shows an archer drawing his bow.

ST BEES SCHOOL

Behind the priory lies St Bees School, founded in 1583 by Edmund Grindal of Hensingham, whom Elizabeth I made Archbishop of York and later Canterbury. His coat of arms is carved in stone over the main entrance to the school. Born in the village of St Bees in 1517, Grindal's house still stands on the corner of Finkle Street and Cross Hill. The older part of the school lies opposite the Priory, and the north wing of the U-shaped building is the original schoolhouse. The builders possibly recycled stone from the priory. The south wing was built in the 1840s and the chapel and headmaster's house early last century.

Part of the historic core of St Bees School

STAGE 9

St Bees to Whitehaven

11km (6.5 miles)

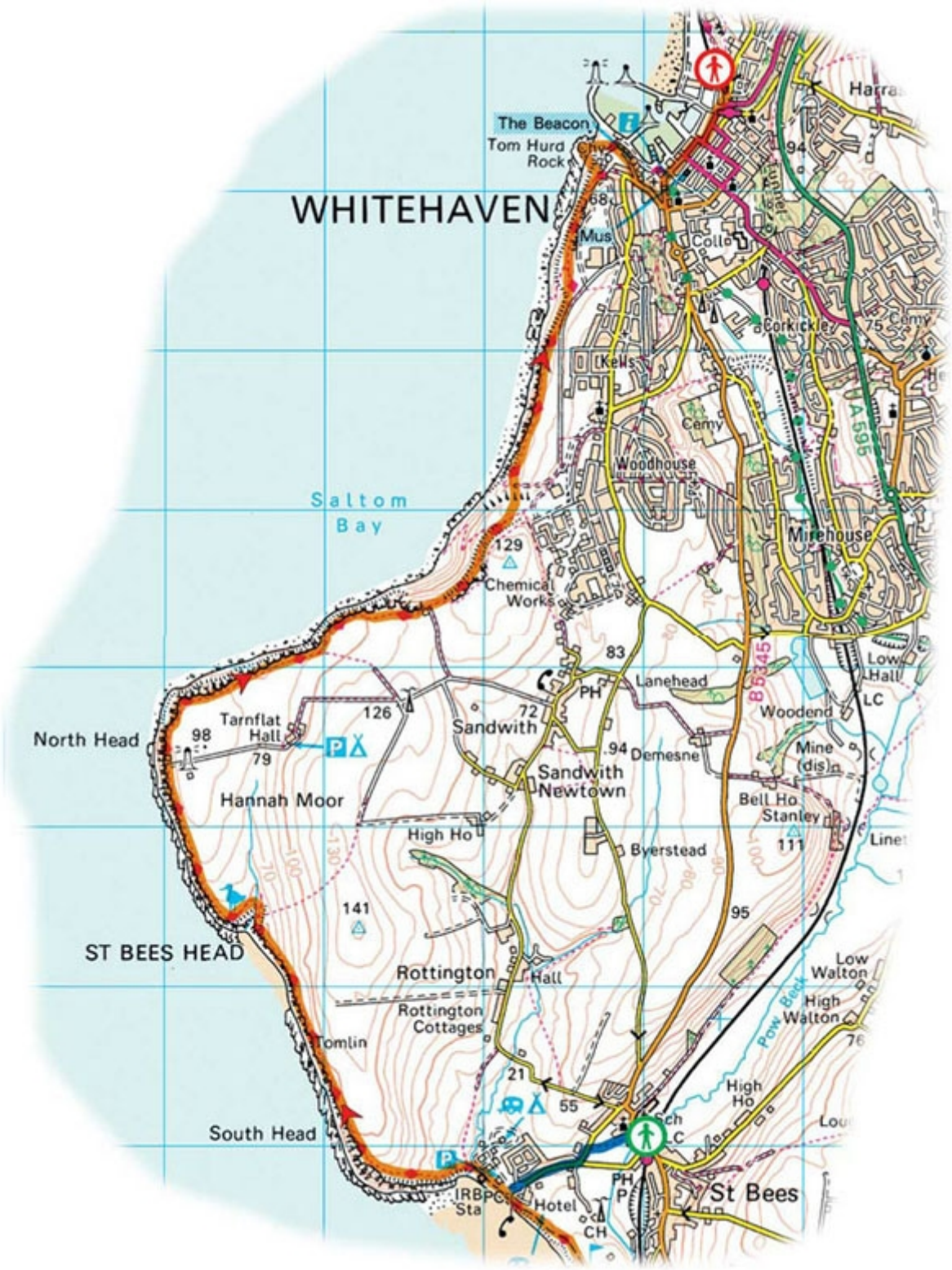
ST BEES HEADS

This next stretch of the Way crosses the twin south and north St Bees Heads, an area designated as a Heritage Coast. The twin Heads of Baruth (Barr-ruadh – Irish for 'redhead' – on account of the colour of the cliffs) rise to 100m, the highest coastal point in the northwest of England and the highest on the Way. The red St Bees Sandstone was laid down in desert conditions some 240 million years ago. It is possible that the headland marked the end of the chain of Roman signal stations that once stretched northwards along the coast to Hadrian's Wall. The headland forms the southern boundary of the Solway and served as a beacon site, linking with St Michael's Mount, Workington, and Newton Knott, Muncaster, to warn of Scottish raids.

Wainwright's Coast to Coast Walk starts at St Bees, a route you share for the next 6km. Starting from the seafront promenade pass the lifeboat station, cross the bridge over Rottington Beck by further caravan sites, and begin to climb the South Head. The fence is initially on your right – the clay cliffs are eroding. Continue along the clifftop path after a stile with the fence on your left. Several more stiles bring you to the small stream that leads left into Fleswick Bay (2.5km).

SOUTH HEAD

The South Head (or Tomlin) appears to be the least interesting of the two but some old walling and coastal plants are to be seen including thrift, sea campion and sea plantain, particularly on the cliff ledges. Where wet 'seeps' are present golden saxifrage and watercress is present. The cliff is a superb viewpoint, both southwards and towards the North Head. Below the South Head lies a site, mostly eroded by the sea, where Mesolithic stone blades and small flints for tools were produced.



FLESWICK BAY

Fleswick Bay was once the haunt of smugglers and it is easy to imagine the small dark caves concealing kegs of brandy and bottles of whisky. The bay is a good place to look for semi-precious stones such as agates, and has a wonderful sculpted sandstone shore.

Continue from the stream, over a stile and above and along the path by the left-hand fence that climbs and follows the edge of North Head. After further stiles pass by the coastguard's lookout with the lighthouse off to your right. After a further stile the way officially crosses a stile to your left and then follows the clifftop tight by a right-hand fence. Later a further stile readmits you to a field, a point which can be reached by a more direct route than the cliff-edge path, and then continues near the cliff edge and sometimes in the adjacent field to arrive at Birkham's Quarry and cottages (4km). **Note** Extensions to the quarry may produce footpath diversions. The Coast to Coast walk leaves the Cumbria Coastal Way at Birkham's Quarry.

NORTH HEAD

The North Head's impressive cliffs have the added attraction of an RSPB reserve; the site was declared an SSSI in 1974 on account of its ornithological and botanical significance. The cliffs provide one of England's major seabird nesting sites,

with populations of herring gull, kittiwake, fulmar, guillemot, razorbill and a few puffin, running into many thousands of nesting pairs. The clifftop vegetation provides nesting opportunities for other species. This is the only English nesting site of black guillemot. Gannet, shearwater and eider duck can, at appropriate times, be seen out to sea. As well as birds, rabbit, lizard, slow worm and 15 species of butterfly may be found. The clifftop grasslands harbour sea pink, scurvy grass, cocksfoot grass, Yorkshire fog, bloody cranesbill, wood vetch, bitter vetch, orpine, knapweed and yarrow. On the drier banks are harebell, yellow hawkweeds, tormentil and thyme.

The earliest lighthouse on the North Head was built in 1718 to replace an earlier beacon. A second, coal-burning light was destroyed by fire in 1822, and the current structure was erected in 1866–7. A white, fixed light gives flashes every 20 seconds from the 17m-high tower to guide boats into Whitehaven, and can be seen from the Isle of Man.

St Bees Heads to Whitehaven

When the Coast to Coast walk goes right at Birkam's continue ahead, follow the right-hand wall and then bend left, gently descending beneath the sandstone cliffs with Whitehaven now in sight. Continue on the path, pass the plaque commemorating the opening of the first section of the Way, and continue until the grassed-over tip abuts the track. Turn left at the marker post and follow the path across and down the far side of the former tip with more posts to reach a track. Cross this directly to follow the path on the clifftop by the right-hand fields (1.25km).

With a fence mostly to the right but on two occasions going into the field you eventually reach a track. Keep left and then left again almost immediately on a further path to pass below the buildings and pithead wheel at the former Haig Pit. This path, ignoring a track to the left down to Saltom Pit, takes you towards the chimney of the former Wellington Pit (1.5km).

WEST CUMBRIA COALFIELD

The export of coal is the reason behind the development of Whitehaven and similar towns along this stretch of coast, for between St Bees Head and Maryport lies the seaward edge of the West Cumberland Middle Coal Measures. These heavily faulted strata of Carboniferous rocks dip deep beneath the Irish Sea. The coal is bituminous, suitable for raising steam, coking and household fuel. All mines are now closed; few opencast operations or drift mines exist in Cumbria today.

The West Cumbria coalfield first appears to have been systematically worked in about 1620 by Sir Christopher Lowther at Whitehaven, on estates previously owned by St Bees Priory. The family continued to develop the field and in 1718 Sir James Lowther set up the first steam engine for pumping water from the pits. Prior to mechanisation horses were used underground. Galloway ponies, with panniers, took the coal to the quayside and brought the empty wagons back, and were used to lift coal from the pits and to operate 'gins' to drain them.

HAIG PIT

The last stretch of the Way into Whitehaven crosses the reclaimed site of Haig Pit, originally sunk around 1916 by the Whitehaven Colliery Company. The site is now a working museum and a signpost guides you from our route. The mining company folded in 1933 but not until it had suffered four disasters, resulting in the loss of 83 lives.

By the time it closed in the 1980s there were six parallel roadways going due west under the Solway for 5km, and the workings continued for another 2km westwards. Four seams were mined, 1–4m thick and between lay bands of fireclay.

Haig Pit is a museum readily visited from your walk.

SALTOM PIT

Saltom Bay, like other coastal sites with the name 'salt', was where precious salt used to be extracted from seawater using saltpans. The bay was allegedly a smugglers' cove. Saltom Pit, sunk in 1731, was the first undersea colliery in the country and remained in operation until 1848. The pithead complex stood on a rock platform about 7m above sea level between Saltom Bay cliffs and the shore. The 18th-century technological genius Carlisle Spedding solved the problem of inflammable methane at a shaft depth of over 80m by piping it to the top, even offering it for sale to illuminate Whitehaven! He invented a 'steel mill' to provide underground lighting that would not ignite methane in the pits.

The reclaimed tips hereabouts provide a habitat for 'opportunist' plants which thrive on newly disturbed ground: coltsfoot, scurvy grass, hawkweed, ribwort plantain, white clover and scentless mayweed.

Into Whitehaven

Continue along the path above the cliff edge to reach the side of the Wellington Pit chimney (the 'Candlestick'). Go down past the right-hand side of the chimney, and then bear left near the front of the old pit gatehouse. Follow the path to the left and down to South Beach. Turn right to follow the edge of Whitehaven harbour. At the far end of the docks can be found a Tesco store, garage and, just beyond, the railway station (1.8km).

A town tour (see below) is recommended and goes to the railway station.

WELLINGTON AND DUKE PITS

Wellington Pit operated from 1840–1933 and is still visually prominent, with its candlestick chimney, castellated walls,

entrance lodge and miners' lamp house. The chimney acted as a vent and, in recent years, escaping methane has occasionally been ignited during thunderstorms. This pit used one of the largest pumping engines ever built (1866) and it was here that Whitehaven's worst mining disaster occurred in 1910 when an underground explosion killed 136 men and boys.

The Wellington Pit chimney and the entrance to Whitehaven harbour, with the 'Jonathan Swift' house in the foreground

WHITEHAVEN HARBOUR

The harbour is the oldest on the Cumbria coast and dates back over three centuries. Christopher Lowther began its construction in 1634 as a natural progression from the development of coalmining in the area, aiming to find a market for Cumbrian coal in Dublin. Before this the bay had served as a natural harbour, enabling the Roman Emperor Agricola to provision his advancing legions. From 1125 the monks of St Bees had rights of harbourage.

The next stages of development were mainly along the South Harbour. Besides coal, the port was trading with Virginia, Maryland and the West Indies, and shipments included rum, sugar and tobacco. Slaves were imported and a jetty in the south harbour is named Sugar Tongue, a reference to those times. During the 17th century Whitehaven was a major English port; only Bristol handled more trade. Almost all Ireland's coal was exported from Whitehaven, reaching its peak in the late 1920s when 425,000 tonnes were exported in a year.

The Beacon Visitor Centre on the quayside has interesting displays on Whitehaven's history.

JOHN PAUL JONES

Whitehaven harbour can also claim to be the scene of the last attempted invasion of England, in 1778. Although unsuccessful, the threat of attack at sea significantly reduced trade with America. At the age of 12 a lad from the Scottish side of the Solway, John Paul, became an apprentice seaman to a Whitehaven ship owner but later settled in America. In 1777, now known as John Paul Jones, he was given command of the privateer the *Ranger* during the American War of Independence. As he was ill-equipped to take on the might of the British Navy in open combat Jones decided to set fire to their ships in his former home waters.

On 23 April 1778 Jones landed about 30 armed men at Whitehaven. He spiked the guns of the fort, which was situated next to Duke Pit. He then set fire to three ships in the harbour and had 200 ships at his mercy. He was betrayed by one of his men and the alarm was given. The *Ranger* was eventually sunk but not before Jones and his crew had escaped, complete with spoils from his North Sea actions, to Holland.

Whitehaven harbour

WHITEHAVEN

The name Whit-fold (or 'White Head') was known in the 12th century, and in 1295 Whyot-haven is mentioned. When the area was owned by St Bees Priory it developed as a small fishing village. The lands came into the ownership of the Lowther family in the 17th century, and during John Lowther's ownership the population grew from 250 to over 2000 at the time of his death in 1705. The town's development was rapid but carefully thought out, and Whitehaven became the earliest example of a post-medieval planned town in England, laid out in a gridiron pattern. Sir John Lowther divided the grid into plots about 5m wide. The builders were obliged to build their fronts above a certain height, usually at least three storeys, and their doors and windows were made to approved measurements. All buildings and warehouses were built to a multiple of the 5m-plot width, creating a pleasing sense of balance and proportion. During the late 19th and early 20th centuries greed led to over-intensive development and poor sanitation. Modern redevelopment has not all been in character with the town.

A TOUR OF WHITEHAVEN

Go alongside South Harbour and turn left at the end to enter West Strand. Pass the end of Sugar Tongue Quay, cross the road to the Royal Standard pub on your right, and then reach the Old Customs House (1810–11, with a porch of Tuscan columns). Beyond this bear right, cross the main road by the roundabout, and go into Roper Street. The TIC lies just off to the right. Continue directly ahead to the left of Golden Lion House.

Golden Lion House was formerly a pub but originally the Customs House, dating from the early 17th century. Nos 44 and 45 Roper Street have Georgian gothic shop fronts. Further along on the right nos 36 and 40 retain some fine Georgian features, and the street has several restored 18th-century houses. Opposite is No 25, home of Captain Daniel Brocklebank, founder of a shipping company of that name which, in turn, became part of the famous Cunard line. Brocklebank's operated a shipyard here from1780–1865. No 30, at the end on the left, was built in 1743 by James Spedding, the son of Carlisle. The acorn on the pediment over the door is a reminder of the Spedding coat of arms, but the building has had 19th-century details imposed on its 18th-century structure.

The coal sculpture in the gardens of St Nicholas church tower

At the end turn left into Scotch Street.

On your left you will see a fine terrace of early 18th-century merchants' houses demonstrating the 5m-plot width. Union Hall, by the traffic lights, has been described as 'an essential part of Italianate Whitehaven'. These houses are best seen from across the road in Lowther Street.

Cross the road just short of the traffic lights and bear right into Lowther Street to pass the Civic Hall. Further along this street is Whitehaven Castle.

The castle was built in its current form by Sir James Lowther in 1769. Sir James, later the Earl of Lonsdale, made this his Whitehaven residence. It was later used as a hospital, and now housing.

Go back down Lowther Street, and turn right into Scotch Street.

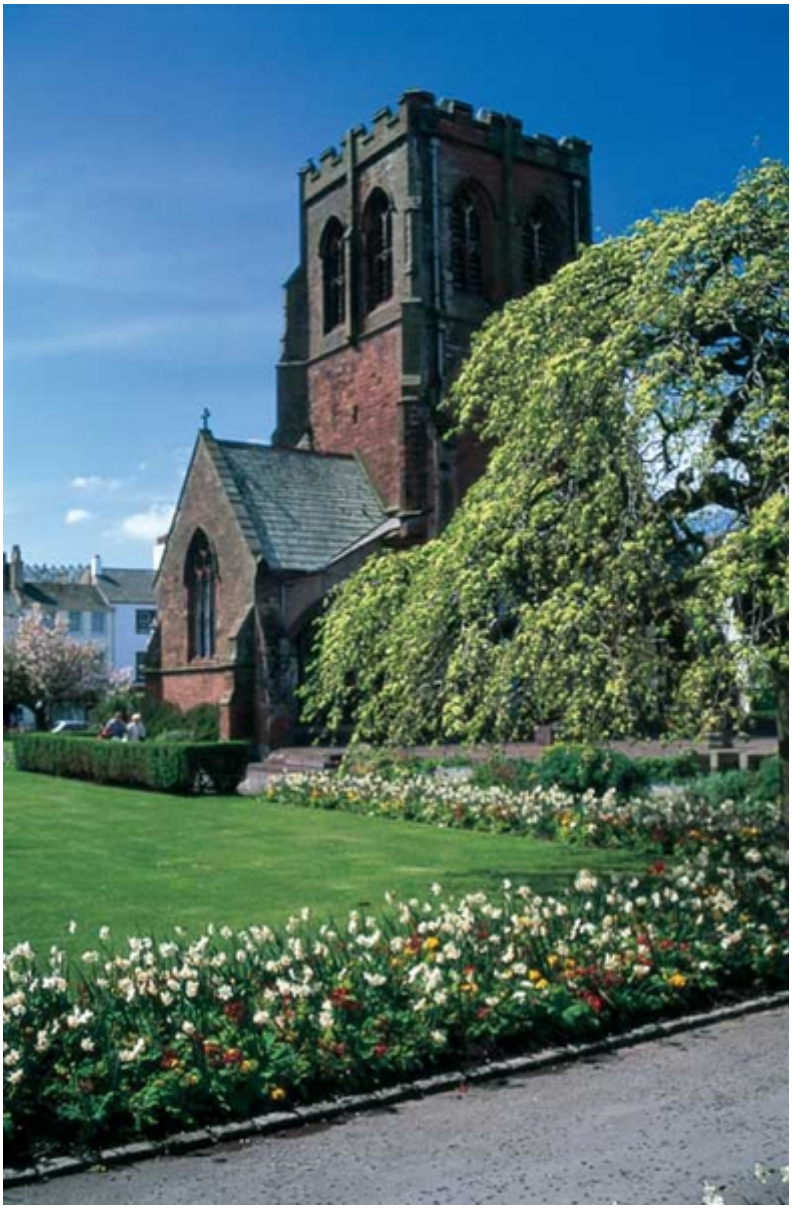
Scotch Street has some more elegant terraces, with the 'finest house in Whitehaven', No 14, across to the left. This mid-18th-century stone building has five bays, a top balustrade, and a doorway with Ionic columns.

Continue along Scotch Street and on your right is Duke Street.

In the lower left-hand corner of Duke Street is Somerset House with its notable chimneys built about 1750. The Gothic porch with clustered shafts is reached by an outer stair. The house was named after the Duke of Somerset who has an estate just north of here at Bransty.

Follow Scotch Street uphill and turn left into George Street. Continue along, then turn right into Queen Street and up to St James's Church.

This church was designed by the engineer Carlisle Spedding and built in 1752–3. Pevsner says it has 'the finest Georgian Church interior in the County'. The ceilings are attributed to Italians, and the painting over the altar, *The Transfiguration*, originally hung in Madrid. The pulpit is a wineglass shape, standing on high columns, and originally had reading pews in front of it. The galleries around three sides stand on Tuscan columns and carry influted Ionic columns. The Florentine-style baptistery is of Sienna marble (c1650) and the altar is cedar wood decorated with gold. The sanctuary lamp is a coal miner's lamp.



St Nicholas church tower, Whitehaven

Return down Queen Street, continue over George Street and bear diagonally right to cross Duke Street and go into the gardens of the tower of St Nicholas Church Centre.

Originally a small chapel built in 1693, St Nicholas was rebuilt as a church in 1883 but destroyed by fire in 1971. In the churchyard is the grave of Mrs Mildred Gale (there is a plaque in the tower to her memory), wife of George Gale, a local tobacco dealer. They were married in Virginia but returned to Whitehaven with three children from her first marriage. The two boys went to school at Appleby but when their mother's will was contested, in America, the boys had to return to her first husband's family. If this hadn't happened the course of history would have been very different: one of the boys was George Washington, the first US President. The churchyard also has an interesting iron-ore sculpture, the 'Children of the Pits'.

From the front of St Nicholas tower turn right into Lowther Street.

On your right you come to the 1833 Regency-style (now Lloyds TSB) bank complete with Doric columns and period wrought-iron balustrade. Across the road lies the shop of the long-established wine company R. & H. Jefferson, founded on the import of rum from the West Indies to Whitehaven in 1785, which now forms part of the successful Rum Story Museum.

Turn first right down pedestrianised King Street, cross the main road at the end and then go left and immediately right into Tangier Street. Continue down Tangier Street to the Tesco store and garage, behind which you will find the railway station.

On the way pass the Waverley Hotel, once Tangier House, which was built as a mansion for Captain Richard Senhouse (see Stage 11). The Shipwright's Arms, an old Whitehaven pub, is on the right.

STAGE 10
Whitehaven to Workington
12.5km (7.6 miles)

Leaving Whitehaven

From the entrance to Whitehaven railway station go forward and then left from the main road behind the Tesco garage. Turn immediately left again along the track between the railway and the cliff. Follow this tarmac cycle track around Redness Point and rejoin the road near Parton (2km). The ruins along the track – which used to be the wagonway between this stretch of coast and the harbour – include those of the William and Henry Pits.

WILDLIFE HIGHLIGHTS

The local outcrops of Triassic sandstone appear dismal on a wet day but warm and colourful when the sun shines. Along this stretch there are many signs of past industry, yet the area is rich in wildlife and unusual plant species. Fulmar live on the cliffs; wild flowers, such as hemp agrimony, wood vetch, dyer's greenwood and the narrow-leaved everlasting pea, can be found. Short-eared owl and kestrel hunt between the cliffs and the sea.

Go left on the road, pass the Lowther Arms to your right and arrive at The Square adjacent to Parton station and war memorial (500m).

PARTON

The village is sandwiched between the railway and cliffs, but the original settlement clustered round an ancient port that was extended in 1705 by the local landowner, Mr Fletcher of nearby Moresby Hall, when he built a pier to ship out his coal. It may have been a port in Roman times, serving the fort on the headland above.

Go under the bridge by the station and turn right to follow along the coastline and cross the footbridge over Lowca Beck. Turn right and go under the railway, then follow the track above the stream to meet the road. Turn left to the next road junction where we meet an alternative route going via Moresby Church (750m).

MORESBY

Overlooking Parton is St Bridget's Church, Moresby, with fine views across to the sea. The church was built in 1822–3 next to the site of an earlier one, the chancel arch of which still stands in the churchyard. It is one of a few churches in Cumbria dedicated to St Bridget (or St Bride), who probably originated as the Irish goddess Brighida. The church and its grounds are part of the 1.5ha site of a Roman fort, built by the XXth legion under Hadrian in AD128–38.

Just across the road is a Grade I listed Jacobean building, Moresby Hall. Pevsner describes it as 'an eminently interesting building with a splendid façade of c1629–1700. It is rusticated, as if it were in Bohemia'. This two-and-a-half storey house was built onto an older structure and contains a barely recognisable pele tower with a spiral staircase. The hall annex has mullioned windows, with the two parts separated by a narrow courtyard. The enormous Elizabethan chimney-breast marks the possible site of the original kitchen and there are rumours of a secret passage to the church where members of the Fletcher family, who built the hall, are buried. After the death of the last direct heir in 1720 ownership changed hands. The building is not open to the public, but a good view can be gained from the road.

The rusticated front of Moresby Hall

Go left steeply up the road through Lowca village emerging, beyond the school, where the 30mph limit ends (850m).

LOWCA

Beneath the reclaimed colliery spoils by Lowca Beck was the site of one of the region's most famous engineering works. The Lowca foundry was set up around 1763 by Adam Heslop to make brass cannons for local merchant vessels. The firm continued to prosper after the American War of Independence, making fittings for much-needed replacement vessels and producing machinery for the mining industry. Heslop designed and built the first rotary winding engine in the region in 1791. A pit engine built in the same year can be seen in London's Science Museum.

In 1799 Heslop, in a partnership, began to construct steam railway engines. During the early 1840s the firm built locomotives for the Maryport and Carlisle Railway Company and continued to make steam engines for collieries, ironworks and the iron-ore mines. In 1843 the first iron ship to be built in Cumberland was constructed by the firm. Two of the railway engines built by the company in 1864 and 1866 are still running on the Talyllyn Railway in Wales. Time and money have healed the scars left by the tip and the tar works.

Micklam coal mine once stood here. More recently it produced clay for locally produced bricks, as well as coal. The clay was used to make local pottery and was of sufficient quality to cause Aaron Wedgwood to come and investigate it in 1698.

Continue along the road for around 500m, with an intrusive group of seven wind turbines to your left. Immediately opposite the third turbine (a path goes off to your right) cross to the left-hand side of the road to pass through a small gate. Follow the path by the left-hand fence as if going directly towards the third turbine to reach an embankment with a gate to your left. Turn right along the embankment and go through the gate ahead.

The route is now along an enclosed track, formerly a railway line to the mines and tar works. Follow this down to the edge of Harrington where you continue down Rose Hill with its attractive terrace of houses. Cross over the railway bridge to reach Harrington harbour (3.1km).

Along the inclined railway bed you pass into the district of Allerdale ('the dale of the River Ellen'), once a Norman barony and hunting forest covering the northwestern part of Cumbria.

HARRINGTON

Harrington (anciently Haverington) derived its name from Hearingas who once held the territory. Henry Curwen (see below) built a quay here in 1760 to export coal from his local mines.

John Curwen opened a coastal colliery in 1825 and there was a major attempt to enlarge undersea workings, but poor management resulted in the sea flooding in. From 1839–87 there was a shipyard, as well as a mid-19th-century ironworks around the harbour. Coalmining finally ceased in Harrington in the 1970s.

Harrington parish church, St Mary's, is around 400 years old. It has a font dated 1634 (but which may be medieval) and part of an Anglo-Danish cross with intertwined decoration. Just beyond the church lies Harrington Nature Reserve, a former reservoir with open water and reed beds. Over 60 species of bird have been recorded.

Follow round the harbour and take the track to the rear of Harrington Sailing and Fishing Club. This track leads towards the railway line, but ignore the first underpass. Continue round the point with the buildings of Workington Steelworks now in view. Keep near to the shore side of the railway and then use the underpass numbered 24 or 25 to cross the line. Continue by the railway to meet a road at the end of the housing development. Continue ahead, keeping on the path that lies as near to the railway (on your left) as possible. Ignore the private bridge to the steelworks site and continue on the path until it brings you to a road, Bessemer Way (3km).

THE DEVELOPMENT OF WORKINGTON

The town derives its name from either the tribal settlement of Weorc's people or the Celtic word for white or clear water. Coal was exploited from outcrops in the area before 1650. Along with most of these coastal settlements, Workington was under the control of a local family, the Curwens of Workington Hall. The turreted keep-like engine house of Jane Colliery, with a battlemented chimney and sunken gin platform, lies just to your right when entering the town.

Like Barrow, the extraordinary growth of Workington in the 1870s was due to the boom in iron production. The first furnace was built in 1763 at Seaton, and the pioneer of the steel-making process, Henry Bessemer, developed his production techniques locally. The area had plentiful supplies of essential raw materials – iron ore, limestone and coal (for

coke), and water. The advent of the railway to supply a wider market aided further industrial development. The huge site was, until 2006, a world leader in manufacturing high-quality railway track.

The former Workington steelworks during the time it produced iron and made railway lines

Turn left along the road and cross the railway. Take the first right turn into Lakes Road, cross a railway track, and then turn right into Prince's Way and cross another railway track.

Continue ahead on a track, through a gateway until the track bends left. Leave the track to climb a stile and some facing steps and then follow the path over the reclaimed slag bank to reach, via the edge of the slag quarry, the highest point.

The ridge path towards the river mouth is then used for descent (1.8km).

THE MOUTH OF THE DERWENT

The slag mound hides St Michael's Mount, originally the site of a Roman signal station, on which a beacon was lit to warn of Scottish raids.

The River Derwent drains the valleys of six Lakeland lakes – Thirlmere, Derwentwater, Bassenthwaite, Loweswater, Crummock Water and Buttermere. In AD870 monks carrying St Cuthbert's body from Lindisfarne escaped from the Danes by boat via the mouth of the river.

Across the river lies Workington Docks, originally developed to export coal. River turbulence hindered the coal vessels' access to the original staithes in the riverbed (the coal came to this south bank by a wagonway from Curwen's mines). The bend in the north bank of the river was then developed as a dock basin. The main Lonsdale basin was built in 1864–6 and is still a commercial port.

Turn right along the road, pass the beehive-like structure (Billy Bumley's House, a copy of an earlier construction – now buried under slag banks – that was a shipping navigational aid) and continue until you are just short of joining Curwen Road. Go to your left down the marked cycleway to skirt the pool off the river used by the Vanguard Sailing Club. The path then crosses the River Derwent by the foot and rail bridge. If you wish to go into Workington centre drop down on the near bank and follow the quayside until the road crosses the railway by Workington station (1km to bridge, 1.5km to centre).

Stage 11 continues from the bridge.

WORKINGTON

In May 1568 Mary Queen of Scots landed at Workington after her defeat at Langside. Sir Henry Curwen gave her shelter at Workington Hall and from here she wrote her letter of appeal to Queen Elizabeth I. As a token of thanks Mary left an agate cup known as the 'Luck of Workington' when she moved to Cockermouth Castle.

The building is based on a 14th-century pele tower and vaulted basement. During Elizabeth's reign wings were added to the great hall and kitchen. John Curwen rebuilt the hall towards the end of the 18th century with the profits of his coalmining ventures. John Carr, a fashionable northern architect, was engaged for the project. The Curwen family occupied the hall until the 1920s when they moved to the roundhouse on Belle Island (named after Isabella Curwen) on Windermere. The building suffered through neglect and billeted World War II soldiers but it is hoped that much-needed restoration work

will enhance its grandeur. The hall is open to the public but check at the TIC first.

Almost across the road lies the Helena Thompson Museum with its scale model of Workington Castle. This museum is housed in a mid-Georgian building that was home to the Curwens' stewards. The museum has an interesting local history section as well as a costume room.

Descending towards the station you will find the delightful Portland Square. The long, narrow cobbled area dates from 1780 and is surrounded by Georgian houses. You can then descend towards St John's Church in Washington Street. This was built in 1823 and its Tuscan portico is allegedly an enlarged copy of that designed by Inigo Jones for St Paul's in Covent Garden, London.

The remains of the buildings of Jane Pit, Workington

Recently restored after fire damage, St Michael's parish church is on an elevated site and houses part of an Anglo-Danish cross shaft with interlaced decoration.

STAGE 11
Workington to Maryport
9.8km (6 miles)

Workington to Siddick

From the railway station retrace your steps to the bridge over the River Derwent. Cross the bridge, turn immediately right over the railway line and follow the riverside path upstream. Where the main railway line bars your way turn left to follow the path by the railway along to reach the port access road by the circular storage tanks. Cross the road directly and go down the track by the railway line with the wind turbines to your left. Continue to the end of the vegetated and reclaimed mineral waste heap where the railway meets the coast (2.5km).

An alternate route (from reaching the road) is to turn left down the road, pass the port entrance and then go right on a road to a car park and the coast. Go near the wind turbines and keep on the paths nearest to the coast to emerge at the same point as described above. This adds 400m to the journey but, despite the turbines, is a pleasant walk.

SIDDICK

Inland from here lies Siddick Pond and the site of another undersea colliery, St Helen's. The pool, formed when the railway embankment was built in the 1870s and the marshy land flooded, is a local nature reserve much frequented by birdwatchers, and has been designated a SSSI. The relatively shallow fringes have some extensive reed beds and over 150 bird species have been recorded. Summer visitors include reed grasshopper and sedge warbler, along with tufted duck, tern, shoveler and whitethroat. In winter snipe, whooper swan, wigeon, teal and gargeny can be seen. At times of migration green and wood sandpiper, greenshank and black tern have been recorded. Peregrine, merlin, sparrowhawk, long- and short-eared owls are attracted here by the prospect of prey at times of large starling roosts. The viewpoint at grid reference NX 998 309 is recommended.

East of the railway at Siddick lies the massive Paperboard mill and the Viridian fibres factory. Iggesund is a Swedish-owned company which manufactures cardboard used for packaging. A sawmill and pulp mill process timber, some of which comes from the Lake District. Viridian, opened in 1968, makes two major products: cigarette filter tow and polyethylene terephalate (PET) pellets, used for the manufacture of plastic bottles.

From here to Maryport the routelies between the seaand the railway.

Siddick to Maryport

Continue to follow the path on the raised beach on the seaward side of the railway line and, via a couple of footbridges, arrive at Flimby railway station (4km).

RAISED BEACHES

Between Siddick and Flimby is a raised beach that, in season, is a cornucopia of shoreline wild flowers. Bloody cranesbill, squat patches of wild rose, sea spurge, sea rocket and various members of the hawkweed and pea family provide a feast for the eyes. Banded snail, butterflies, burnet moth, and ladybirds show themselves in this riotous display of nature (and you don't need to stray from the path to see them). Oystercatcher, ringed plover and skylark may be seen.

FLIMBY

Flimby is a typical mining settlement. In Wedgewood Road is found the fivebayed Allonby House (1731) and nearby Flimby Hall (1766).

From Flimby station continue along the raised beach on the seaward side of the railway. The railway begins to swing inland and the Way keeps to the coastal edge of reclaimed waste and slag banks. Eventually you arrive at the outer banking on the harbour at Maryport. Cross the track, go to the right of the structure and ahead to the basin of Senhouse Dock (with marina). Turn right, left down Marine Drive, and then immediately right to reach the edge of Elizabeth Dock. Follow this round to the aquarium and the estuary of the River Ellen. Cross the river by the bridge(3.3km).

The continuation of the route follows in Section V, but to go to the railway station continue up the main street ahead, drop down through the shops, turn right at the junction and then first left into Station Street. The station lies over the bridge across the River Ellen. Maryport station is the last one situated directly on the route of the Way until Carlisle is reached (the station can be found 600m from the port).

RISEHOW

Risehow is the site of Roman milefortlet 26, and Romano-British pottery dating from the 3rd century has been found here. The fort suggests a continuation of the Hadrianic system south of Maryport – but how far south did this go?

MARYPORT

The old railway embankment around this side of the docks is another SSSI. On the embankment will be found rare flowers such as purple broomrape and pyramidal orchid, and the small blue butterfly along with abundant supplies of its plant food, kidney vetch. The small blue butterfly and the purple broomrape are nationally rare species.

It is apt that the route should enter the town via this historic harbour, where the late L.S. Lowry spent time sketching. The mouth of the River Ellen has been used as a port since Roman times; later there was a village, Ellenfoot, here. In 1750

construction of the harbour began and Humphrey Senhouse, the major local landowner and coal mine operator, renamed the town after his wife Mary, daughter of the Bishop of Carlisle.

MARYPORT HARBOUR

To the seaward side you will see the embankment, sea wall and harbour light. These were constructed below the high-water mark in an attempt to make the dock independent of the tide. The 1846 harbour light is an early example of cast-iron construction. The first dock basin, Senhouse Dock (now the marina), was completed in 1884 and used mainly to export iron railway lines and pig iron. Twice during the building of this basin great storms inundated the workings; just after completion, the trend towards using wider ships meant that the entrance had to be enlarged.

The next, Elizabeth Dock, was opened in 1857 and named after Humphrey Senhouse II's eldest daughter. This was the first wet, non-tidal dock in Cumberland. The Maryport and Carlisle Railway was completed, with an extension to Whitehaven, just before the opening. This brought in more coal traffic and thus increased use of the harbour (although the coal came mostly from the local Senhouse mines). Moored on the Elizabeth Dock is the former River Clyde steam-powered tug the *Flying Buzzard*. From Easter to October visitors can be taken on a guided tour, and the ship's engines are run on some days. Fishing boats use this basin.

Maryport harbour

The opening of the dock in Workington, to take bigger ships, coincided with the closure of Maryport ironworks in 1927. These two events, combined with the decline of local coalmining, led to the gradual demise of the harbour. It officially closed in 1961 with only a trickle of coastal shipping dealing with coal and fish – particularly during the war – having kept the port going. Now regeneration is taking place, including housing and the Aquarium Visitor Centre.

The river crossing occupies the site (up to the 1980s) of a footbridge that, in turn, utilised the pillars of an 1845 swing bridge. The channel had been deepened, removing the ford that once carried the main Carlisle-to-Whitehaven highway, because south of the bridge is a grid of large wooden planks on which ships rested at low tides to have their hulls cleaned and repaired. From the bridge, to your right, is the inlet of the former Ritson's shipyard, from which – due to the narrowness of the channel – ships were launched broadside from 1809 until 1914.

Crossing the River Ellen we find the Maritime Museum and TIC, originally the Queen's Head Inn, rebuilt in 1881. The museum, staffed by knowledgeable local people, tells the story of Maryport Harbour through old photographs and paintings. Exhibits include everything from a whale's tooth to a blunderbuss, and there is a special display about locally born Fletcher Christian of 'Mutiny on the Bounty' fame. It is open from Monday to Saturday between Easter and October.

If you turn right and go over the stile by the gate you come to Mote Hill, once the site of Roman and Norman strongholds.

A TOUR OF MARYPORT

From Mote Hill go back past the museum, cross Senhouse Street and enter King Street. From the bridge turn left and go to quayside Christ Church, dated 1872.

The anchor outside the church was 'caught' by a local fishing boat in the Solway and is dedicated to Maryport seafarers lost at sea. Outside Christ Church is the North Quay wall, the oldest surviving part of the harbour. It continues as Tongue

Pier and, across the harbour to the right, is the North Pier. The area between the two piers was Wood's shipbuilding yard, the first to be established in the town in 1765. The patent slipway is buried under the shingle. The Old Customs House and Harbour Office of 1838 are now a private house, 3 North Quay, with an attractive porch.

Go back to the church and left along King Street until you can turn right into Wallace Lane. Climb the zigzag Market Steps ahead, all 109 of them. Continue up, along Eaglesfield Street, cross the High Street and go forward into Fleming Square.

This was the town's former market square; Charles Dickens likened its cobbles to kidney beans. The square's Georgian and Victorian houses create a scene of elegance, enhanced by conservation work. Like Whitehaven, Maryport was designed on a grid pattern in the mid-18th century, but the town was never fully developed.

Turn left as you enter the square and leave by the top left-hand corner. Follow this road along, across the top of the High Street and then turn right along the top of the cliff along Solway Terrace, the promenade and Maryport harbour then, on Sea Brows, to the site of the Roman fort of Alauna in the field behind the museum.

Maryport harbour

THE ROMANS IN MARYPORT

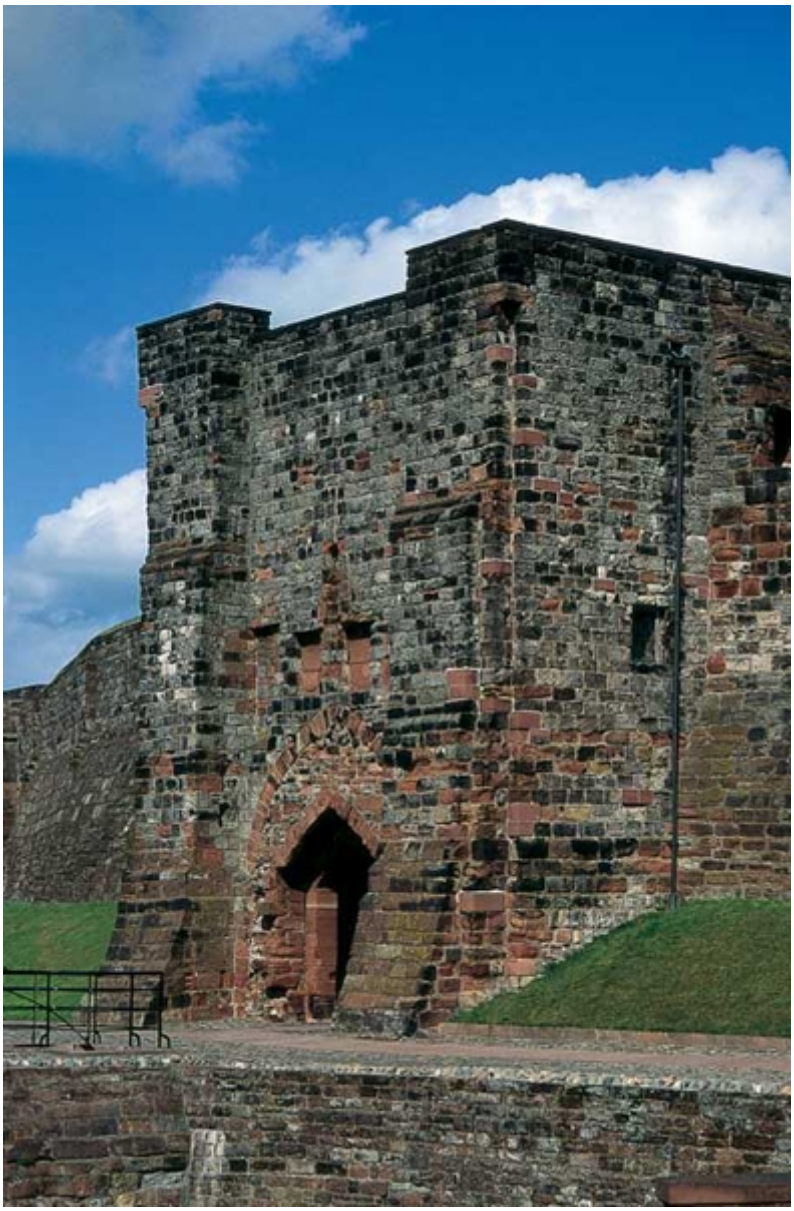
The Romans arrived in this Celtic-speaking region around AD79 under Agricola. Like the port of Ravenglass, Maryport was vital both for bringing in supplies for the occupying forces and as a base for possible invasions of Scotland and Ireland. From Maryport a line of mileforts (1 Roman mile: 1489m) and fortlets (at 494m) ran all the way to Hadrian's Wall at Bowness-on-Solway. The fort was built around AD122–23 in the early years of Hadrian's Emperorship (AD117–138). It appears to have been occupied until AD400 and was contemporary with the fortlets going northwards from here to Moricambe Bay.

After Roman altars were found here in 1870 the Senhouse family carried out extensive axcavations at the fort site. They took some stone for building (even though there was an adjacent quarry), but preserved the altars and some sculptures, along with other marked stones, and took them to their house.

In 1990 the Battery – where guns once pointed out to sea and which was used in Territorial Army training – was refurbished as a museum. It now displays the altar stones, together with models and paintings of Roman life at the fort; it boasts the largest collection of Roman sculpture from a single site in Britain. Seventeen altars have been found, of which 16 bear inscriptions. These were dedicated each January by the commanders when the auxiliaries renewed their oaths of allegiance to the Emperor. A replica watchtower gives panoramic views over the fort site.

The Senhouse Roman Museum opens at varying times throughout the year and can be contacted on 01900 816168. Outside the museum there are fine views across the Solway to southern Scotland; the fort must have been a good vantagepoint from which to watch over the Roman harbour.

SECTION V – THE SOLWAY COAST AND HADRIAN'S WALL



Carlisle Castle (Stage 14)

INTRODUCTION

Stage 12

Maryport to Silloth: 18.8km (11.5 miles)

Stage 13

Silloth to Kirkbride: 26.8km (16.4 miles)

Stage 14

Kirkbride to Carlisle: 29.4km (17.9 miles)

Stage 15

Carlisle to Gretna: 20.1km (12.3 miles)

From Maryport Sea Brows the Way moves from the Irish Sea coast to that of the Solway. This stretch of coast was designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in 1964 and covers some 107sq km. To quote the 1949 National Parks and Countryside Act, the idea behind AONBs is 'to preserve and enhance the natural beauty' of an area. Pressures of tourism, large caravan sites, housing demands and insufficient official backing for conservation mean that the landscape has suffered. It is hoped that the increased support given to AONBs over recent years will lead to better protection of the landscape in the future.

Wildlife is still dominant on some parts of the coast. Oystercatcher add their calls to those of the sandpiper. Cormorant fly low along the crest of the breakers, whilst curlew fly to and fro from the shore and wheatear flit amongst the dune

vegetation. Harbour porpoises can be seen.

The characteristic feature of this section is the continuous raised beach created by post-glacial changes in sea level. The wave-cut beaches represent the coastline as it used to be. Most of this beach is around 8m high but an older line of sea cliffs can sometimes be seen, for example at Swarthy Hill. Along here sea holly and other coastal plants can be found.

Allonby Bay (Stage 12)

Grune Point is the product of longshore drift, where currents have built a finger of land into Moricambe Bay. Around the bay are superb examples of tidal mudflats and saltmarsh where geomorphology and fauna vividly interact. After Grune Point the Way follows the Solway as it narrows; the land, rather than the sea, starts to domninate the route. The open expanse of the Irish Sea is left behind as the Way moves towards the more estuarine areas of the Solway's main tributaries: the Eden, Sark and Esk.

Between Roman withdrawal from Britain and the arrival of the first Anglian colonists from Northumbria in the late 6th/early 7th centuries, the Solway was part of the kingdom of Rheged. For three centuries after the reign of Edward I raids and counter-raids across the Scottish border were a part of everyday life, causing local people to build defensive pele towers – as at Newton Arlosh and Burgh by Sands churches – in which to take shelter.

Many raids continued down the coast. Notable amongst these were one in 1316 when the Scots poured into the Furness area, and another in 1322 when two armies swept down into Cumbria and reached Lancashire.

Cross-border family feuds and raids reached their peak in the 16th century. For many of these families the border did not physically exist, and they changed allegiance to suit the prevailing political situation. These were times of great unease when few could sleep peacefully in their beds for fear of border reivers coming to take cattle, sheep and horses, inflicting injury or death on anyone who resisted. The Act of Union, signed in 1706, gradually brought peace to the region. With this came a degree of prosperity, and for the first time farmers could afford to build their houses and outbuildings in stone.

The Solway was once bridged, from Bowness to Annan, by a railway viaduct, which – apart from its embankments – no longer exists. Other disused railway bridges over roads – listed examples of industrial archaeology – often form the highest points in the landscape. Unless you go inland to Carlisle the only way to cross to Scotland is by the old fords (waths) but this is not advised. Sulwath ('the muddy ford'), situated on the eastern part of the estuary, gave rise to the present name Solway. Other fords existed on the Eden and Esk, such as at Etterby, Grinsdale, Rockcliff, Stonewath and Peatwath by Old Sandsfield, where Edward I crossed to hammer the Scots and where 900 of Alexander II's men died after a raid on Holm Cultram Abbey. One of the fords across the estuary itself was Bowness Wath, from Bowness to Annan, used by Wallace, Edward I and Robert of Winchelsea (Archbishop of Canterbury who travelled the region as a peacemaker during the border troubles).

Looking over the Solway to Criffel from Silloth (Stage 12)

All seems quiet now by the Solway. Shrimps are collected by the northern shore and salmon are caught in the estuary by the age-old method of haaf netting. Fishing rights appear to have been apportioned in relation to the ground held by the adjacent landowners, some being monastic.

There are a significant number of nature reserves along this section, including major areas of raised bogs and important bird, flower and butterfly sites. It is in winter, when the local bird population is swelled by migrant geese, duck and waders from more northern climes, that the area is at its best. Up to 75 species have been seen, with the pinkfoot goose the most prolific visitor.

The winds bite in this part of the world, but the Cumbrian coast receives much lower precipitation than central Lakeland. The wind has given rise to the construction of a major offshore wind power station in the estuary. As it runs inland the Solway Firth becomes increasingly narrow, resulting in the creation of a tidal bore. Although not very high it is very rapid – 'faster than a man on horseback' as the locals say. Under some conditions it can overwhelm the bank and riverbank footpaths.

The Way has strong links with Hadrianic defences here. From Bowness we walk in the area once occupied by Hadrian's Wall and sometimes share our route with that of the Hadrian's Wall National Trail, opened in 2003. There are also literary connections; the Victorian novelist Sir Walter Scott based parts of his work around the Cumbrian coast, particularly along the Solway.

Transport and Accommodation

This is a long section and deserves a reasonable number of days. **For both the day walker and the long-distance walker** the suggested sections are:

Day 1 Maryport to Silloth

Day 2 Silloth to the Kirkbride area

Day 3 Kirkbride to Carlisle

Day 4 A last day from Carlisle to Gretna

Public transport is scarcer in this area. Careful bus timetable consultation will be required by day walkers, who should base their journeys on Carlisle.

Maryport and Carlisle are served by the railway and are directly connected by the Cumbrian Coast line which, for the first time on the Way, no longer gives supporting rail options for walkers. Gretna and Carlisle are linked by rail.

There are some supporting bus services:

60 Maryport–Silloth–Skinburness (not Sunday)
38/38A Silloth–Wigton–Carlisle (not Sunday)
71 Silloth–Anthorn–Kirkbride–Carlisle (not Sunday)
93 Bowness-on-Solway–Anthorn–Burgh by Sands–Carlisle (not Sunday)
101 Carlisle–Rockcliffe (extends to Gretna on Sunday and Bank Holidays)
79, 179, 379 and 382 link Gretna, Metal Bridge and Carlisle

Accommodation is available at Allonby (also camping), Mawbray (camping), Beckfoot (also camping), Silloth (also camping), Kirkbride and Burgh by Sands (very limited) and Carlisle.

The relevant TICs (see Appendix I) are Silloth and Carlisle.

STAGE 12
Maryport to Silloth
18.8km (11.5 miles)

Maryport to Allonby

From Maryport Roman Museum go north along the tarmacadamed path. When it forks go left, down to the promenade. Walk along the promenade until it ends at Bank End Farm and then follow the seaward edge of Maryport Golf Course. Beyond the golf course continue on the raised beach, between the road and sea, past the road junction to Crosscanonby. The Way goes past Saltpans, with a viewing point on the drumlin above the car park, and then continues along a grassy path on the raised beach to Allonby (7.2km).

CROSSCANONBY

Crosscanonby lies just a short distance off the Way, and is worthy of a diversion for those with an interest in architecture and small churches. From the drumlin on which the settlement is situated this fine Norman church looks out towards the Solway. It dates from around AD1100 but incorporates Roman masonry such as the superb chancel arch stones reset from the fort of Alauna (Maryport). There are also several pre-Norman sculptures, including a 10th-century cross shaft decorated with dragons but without any interlaced patterns. A Danish hogback tombstone outside the church provides evidence that a place of worship existed here before the coming of the Normans.

The road up to the village takes you past a small wetland nature reserve with toilets, also worthy of a short diversion.

SALTPANS

Saltmaking is a traditional coastal industry and saltpans were, historically, often operated commercially by local abbeys and priories. Several place names along the indicate former saltmaking sites: Salthouse, Saltam, Salta and Saltcoates. Salt was a valuable source of income for manorial and monastic landlords. The saltpans on the coast below Crosscanonby were built around 1650 by the Senhouse family, were coalfired, and operated until 1736.

A large cobble wall circle with clay infill, sometimes with added peat, acted as a filter called a sleech pit or kinch. After high tides saltladen sand (sleech) was brought from the shore by horse-drawn rake (a hap) and piled up in the kinch. When full, seawater was poured over and brine would trickle into the brine pit. When the brine was concentrated enough that an egg could float in it the solution would be slowly evaporated in iron pans to produce large salt crystals.

Saltmaking was taxable from 1696–1824, and the local salt officer was based at Netherhall. Immediately south of the pans is an ash heap, whilst the foundations of cottages and stables lie over the road. At times the industry could not keep pace with demand and so local boats, from Powfoot, Parton, Whitehaven, Workington and Ravenglass, for example, would sell salted fishing catches to Chester and Liverpool and return with cargoes of salt.

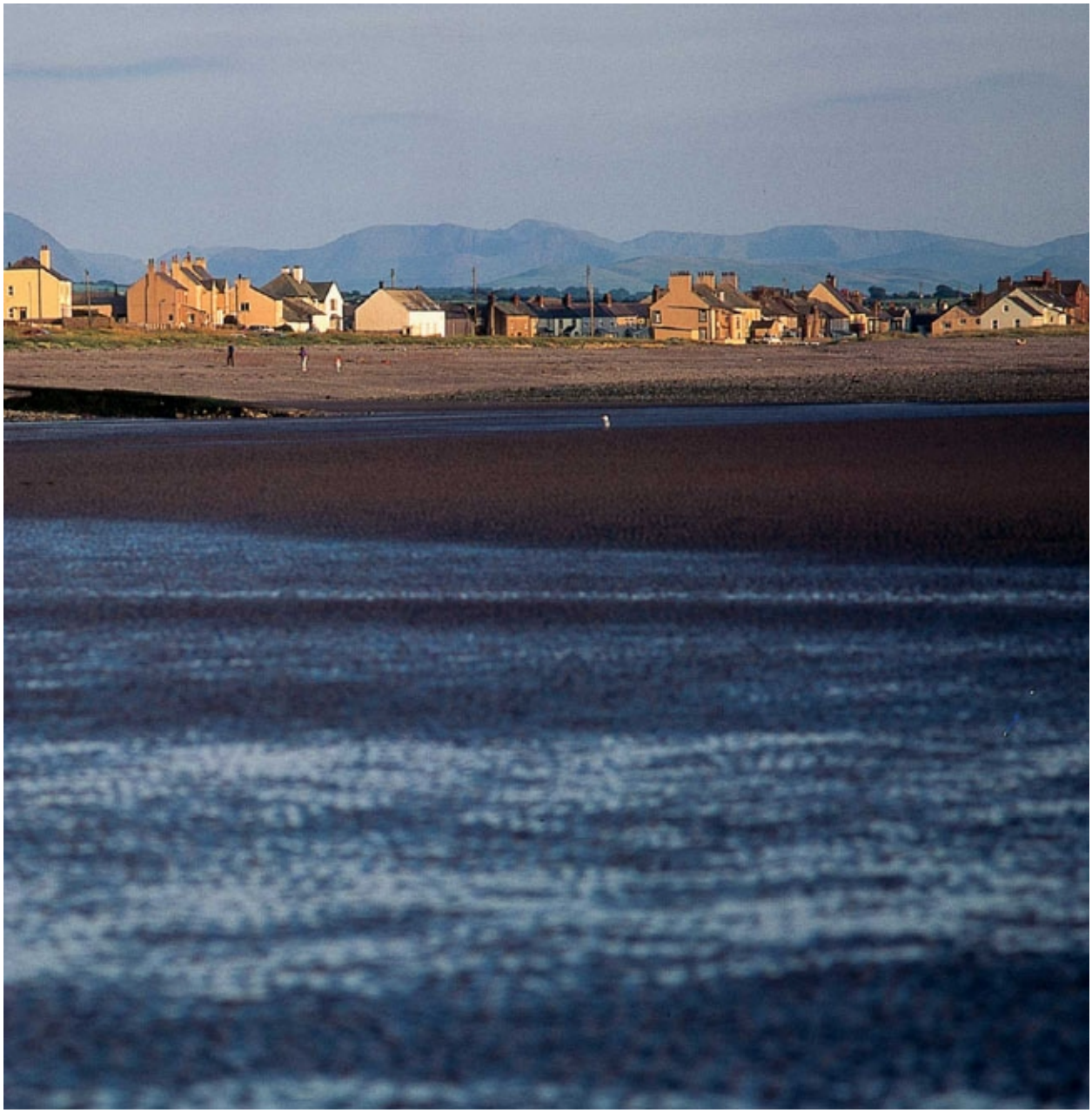
Adjacent to the car park, on Swarthy Hill, is the site of Roman milefort 21. Following excavations in the early 1990s the site is now open to the public. Such fortlets were designed to hold a substantial garrison on a permanent basis, but this one was possibly occupied from AD222–380. The site allows you to inspect the typical layout, and a mock wall has been erected to give an idea of the size of the milefort.

The route to Allonby is, inland, somewhat marred by caravan sites, silo towers and galvanised-iron structures. Even so there are interesting plants: sea holly, yellowhorned poppy and Isle of Man cabbage. The view over the Solway Plain to the northern Lakeland fells is quite something.

ALLONBY

Allonby village was a popular bathing resort in the mid-18th century, and once had a fleet of 50 herring fishing vessels. In 1802 the village was described in *The Beauties of England and Wales* as a ‘neat well built town resorted to in the summer season’. Charles Dickens visited in 1857 but the place did not live up to his expectations of the ‘most delicious piece of sea

coast to be found'. Instead he found a 'small, unruly, outlandish place, rough stone houses in half mourning'. Dickens came with Wilkie Collins during the tour described in *A Tale of Two Idle Apprentices*.



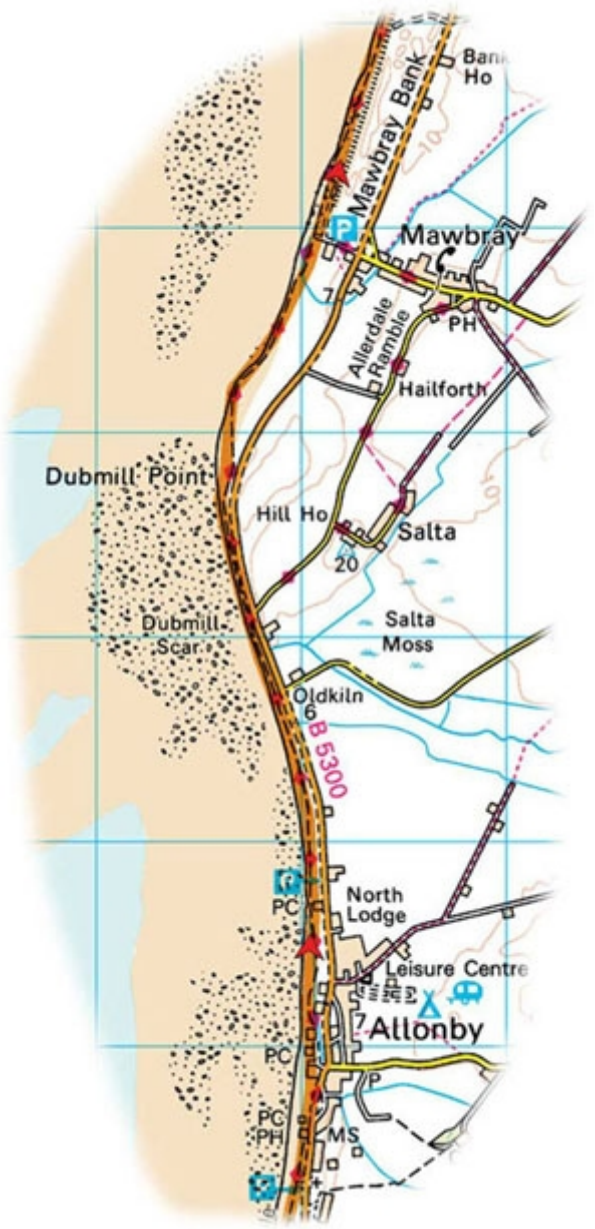
Allonby and its beach

Allonby has a pretty cobbled main street and stream. The only formal buildings are North Lodge (early 19th century) and the former seawater baths of 1835. However, the village has a cluster of attractive buildings and deserves its Conservation Area status. Many of the houses are good examples of vernacular architecture, but the grouping rather than the individual buildings gives the settlement character.

Although its heyday was in the 19th-century Allonby is still a popular place for refreshment and sea bathing. Like at Beckfoot and Cardurnock further along the Way, there is a submerged forest off the coast, revealed at low tides and by the tidal scouring of the sands.

Allonby to Mawbray

Continue along the raised beach from Allonby, crossing the stream by the footbridge. Go to Seacroft Farm where you will have to go round Dubmill Point on the roadside concrete sea defences. The landward side of the beach can be used at low tide. On rounding the point go over the stile facing you and follow the path, by the right-hand fence, that emerges, via a precariously sited beach-side footbridge, at the lane that leads down to Mawbray(4.1km). There are several small wet areas rich in wildlife along the coastal stretch, many formed in poorly drained hollows resulting from glacial drift and local alluvium.



MAWBRAY

This last section was once the site of extensive sand and gravel extraction from the raised beach. The village of Mawbray, a Conservation Area, is situated slightly inland. The site was once that of a grange farm of Holm Cultram Abbey and, at the beginning of the last century, a stone effigy of a warrior was discovered, thought to represent Robert the Bruce who was buried at the abbey. The village pub, the Lowther Arms, is the only pub adjacent to the Way between Allonby and Silloth. Nikolaus Pevsner wrote that the sea had claimed two churches north of here; part of the line of Roman forts may also have been inundated.

MAWBRAY BANK SSSI

From Dubmill Point almost all the way to Silloth our route takes us by the Silloth Dunes and Mawbray Bank SSSI. Excluding a narrow area around Beckfoot this stretch of dunes is almost 8km long, and is one of three such dune systems in West Cumbria. The transition from vegetated shingle bank, through mobile and fixed dunes, to dune grassland and maritime heath, is a fine example of succession. The natterjack toad and great crested newt have been found in the area, along with vegetation typical of different habitats across the succession. Around Wolsty Bank can be found northern marsh orchid, whilst further north the Mediterranean tassel hyacinth blooms. These are fragile habitats – the less trampling the better – so please stick to paths or use the beach.

UPPER SOLWAY FLATS AND MARSHES SSSI

Seaward of Dubmill Point and almost all of the remainder of the Way to Carlisle is the Upper Solway Flats and Marshes SSSI. This covers an area of almost 30,000 ha and reaches from Dubmill across to the Scottish shore. It includes the whole estuary and most of the adjacent salting. A good place to appreciate this SSSI is Grune Point, Skinburness (see pp.175–76). At Grune birdwatchers have recorded pinkfooted and barnacle geese, oystercatcher, knot, lapwing, ringed plover, dunlin, golden plover and bartailed godwit, with wigeon, mallard, teal, pintail, shelduck and cormorant.

Fishing at Dubmill Point

Mawbray to Silloth

This section is best walked along the sandy beach at low tide. Avoid the beach when the tide is high or when birds are roosting. Equally the dune path, whilst largely grassy, is vulnerable to erosion. For those using the land path continue ahead, along the path on the seaward side of the raised beach. At Beckfoot you have to cross the stream by the road bridge. Regain the open green by taking the next path to the left. Continue along the seaward path or track, crossing some stiles, and later the edge of the golf course where a route on the edge of the beach is necessary. This brings you to a car park by the entrance to Silloth dock. Turn inland and follow the road, going round two sides of the dock, to arrive on the cobbled streets by the Green and the Golf Hotel (7.5km).

BECKFOOT

Beckfoot Roman fort site, Bribra, covers slightly more than 1ha and is one of the smallest garrisons of the Hadrianic defences. Its walls were 2m thick with internal, rectangular towers. Some traces of a civic settlement lie southeast of the fort. At exceptionally low tides the remains of a submerged forest may be seen off Beckfoot shore, probably a hazel wood some 6000 years old.

SILLOTH

Silloth (once Sea-lath, ‘the barn by the sea’) was part of the grange farm of Holm Cultram Abbey. When the abbey was dissolved in 1538 its open-field farming system of some 220ha was purchased by a Robert Wheatley, who leased out

parcels to tenant farmers. These farmers elected to continue the old communal system and, such was its success, a further 176ha were added later.

Silloth was connected to Carlisle by rail in 1856 in order to serve as a port for the manufacturers of the city. It was developed as a holiday resort, with a grid-iron pattern of streets culminating in the wide promenade of Criffel Street. The resulting town was full of Victorian elegance, but today bedecked with caravans and amusement arcades it fulfils its original function for a different market.

Following the demise of Port Carlisle, Silloth Dock opened in 1858. It deals mainly in cattle and grain, as indicated by the adjacent flourmill.

Don’t miss the Solway Discovery Centre if you want to learn more about the Solway coast.

STAGE 13
Silloth to Kirkbride
26.8km (16.4 miles)

Silloth to Skinburness

Go to the concrete seafront promenade by Silloth's Green and continue north until the path meets the road. The road bends to the right, by the sign for Skinburness, where the Way goes to the left of houses and the path continues by the estuary.

After Solway House the track goes to the right of a small terrace before meeting the end of Dick Trod Lane (right). Go ahead through the gate facing you and follow the distinct path with the coast just to your left. The track narrows through gorse, then a gate is used to enter a field. The path is still distinct as it follows the right-hand fence; leave the field by the gate in the far right-hand corner. The path continues directly ahead (aiming for the radio masts) and along to the headland of Grune Point. Turn right to pass the lookout memorial and continue along the track by the creek. Go through a gate and continue to meet the road just east of the Skinburness Hotel (8.8km).

GRUNE POINT

Skinburness is said to mean 'the headland of the demonhaunted castle', the headland being Grune Point. St John's Chapel on Grune Point is one the places suggested as the Green Chapel where Sir Gawain had his fateful meeting with the Green Knight. It was also the location of Bonnie Prince Charlie's meeting with the Jacobites after Culloden in Sir Walter Scott's *Redgauntlet*.

To the east of Grune Point are the windswept levels of Moricambe Bay. Around the bay are flat marshes where hedges and trees only survive in sheltered spots. The flats and marshes of the Upper Solway Firth form one of the largest continuous intertidal habitats in Britain, only exceeded in size by Morecambe Bay and the Wash. The whole estuarine complex is a site of national and international importance for wintering wildfowl and wading birds, as it forms a vital link in a chain of westcoast estuaries used by migrating birds. The site is noted for its population of natterjack toad and invertebrates, whilst the geomorphology and vegetation of the saltmarshes (merses) are of great importance where broad transitions to mature upper marsh are particularly well represented. There are also a number of notable geological exposures, mostly on the northern shores.

Skinburness and the creek on the common

Plant species that can be seen around Grune include sea holly, burnet rose, bloody cranesbill, the Isle of Man cabbage and Dyer's greenweed. The point is also a superb place from which to watch the tides.

SKINBURNESS PORT

In 1299–1300 Edward I gathered a fleet for the invasion of Scotland at the port of Skinburness. With a company of about 50 ships he sheltered in the lee of the point, waiting for an opportune moment to confront the Scots, led by Wallace, and seize the land around the Solway for England. Edward later granted the town of Skinburness charters for a market and fair.

In 1301 the port and much of the village were destroyed in a great storm. Four years later the landowners, the monks of Holm Cultram Abbey, built Newton Arlosh to replace Skinburness and the population moved away. The embankment crossed on the Way south of Skinburness was originally built to protect Silloth Grange, the abbey farm, from inundation by the sea.

Skinburness to Abbeytown

Note This next 7km section of the walk to Rumbling Bridge **should not be attempted at times of high tide or in misty conditions**. In those circumstances – despite the waymarking – it is potentially dangerous, and the back roads from Skinburness to Rumbling Bridge should be used instead. The larger creeks are bridged, but walkers have to jump across the smaller creeks and drains. The wildlife, especially geese and skylark at certain times of the year, is superb, and the views both close by and to Skiddaw and the northern Lakeland fells make this a very special area.

At the junction of the track with the road climb immediately left up the sea dyke, then down to pass over a gated bridge and enter Skinburness Marsh. Follow the line of marker posts ahead (they provide a general guide only as small diversions to cross wet patches will be required). These lead to a footbridge near a fence corner, the closest the route gets to the prominent house at Sea Dyke End (1.7km).

After the bridge keep parallel to the right-hand fence to cross a stile in a fence at right angles to your route and some 50m from the right-hand fence. Continue to follow the waymarker posts to a further stile by a gate in the far left-hand corner of this enclosed section of marsh. From here keep the longer vegetation and slightly higher ground to the right. Marker posts and a few pipe-bridged culverts assist in routefinding. Some farms are seen to the right, as is the end of a metalled road leading to the common. The farm nearest the route here is East Border Farm (3.3km).

Routefinding is now easier as you keep near the right-hand boundary of the common. The route bends more to the right and inland with views ahead to Skiddaw. Gradually, as the common narrows, walk near the bank of the River Waver and continue ahead to cross a stile by a gate. Go over the next stile and follow the riverbank path until you turn right to meet the road. Go left to cross Rumbling Bridge (2km).

Immediately over the bridge go left down steps to rejoin the riverbank (Cumbria Coastal Way sign). Turn right and follow the bankside path to cross a stile and, later, a footbridge. Cross the next field parallel to the overhead electricity wires, and cross the plank footbridge and stile. In the next field turn right to pass under the overhead wires and go up to pass through a gate in the right-hand corner. Continue by the right-hand hedge, go through a gate in the right-hand corner and continue in this direction in the second large field. Go through the gate in the far right-hand corner and then keep directly ahead on a track leading to Abbeytown and the church (1.5km).

CUMBERLAND TURF

The surrounding flat landscape commemorates the monastic pioneers who drained and reclaimed wet land here. Old trees have been bent by the wind, and new ones fight for survival in the face of inhospitable, salty draughts. The saltmarshes were the source of Cumberland turf, a favourite surface for lawns, bowling greens, tennis courts at Wimbledon, and football pitches at major stadia up the early 1990s. The Norse practice of transhumance still takes place here: Lakeland Herdwick and Swaledale sheep from the high fells are brought down here to graze in winter. Some of the marshes are accumulating as the sea deposits alluvium, while others are being eroded by tidal currents and river channels.

ABBEYTOWN

The village of Abbeytown served Holm Cultram Abbey. A serious fire, caused by arson in 2006, resulted in substantial

damage to this fine building. The historian W.G. Collinwood mentions a moated mound to the north of the church – a berg – whilst Pevsner refers to it as a mote. Pevsner also comments on Millgrove House (dated 1664), an almshouse some 200m from the church down the Wigtown Road. It is a two-storey dwelling with mullioned bow windows, and worth a detour.

The word holme (holm) means 'island', and much of this area would have been surrounded by sea and marsh in earlier times. In AD1130 the Scots occupied most of Cumbria, and in 1150 Prince Henry, son of David of Scotland, established the abbey here. As at Furness, the monks were members of the Cistercian order. The abbey was originally a daughter house of Melrose Abbey across the Solway, from where its first monks came. The monks were farmers, but were also involved in saltmaking and the iron trade (being granted an ore mine and furnace at Whitehaven) as well as land reclamation around the Solway. The abbey owned the lands on both sides of the Solway, as well as distant parcels in the Eden valley and Lakeland fells. The fortunes of the abbey were directly affected by the relationship between Scotland and England; despite suffering several raids from Scotland, the abbey grew to be the wealthiest in Cumberland.

Holme Cultram church – the former abbey

Abbeytown to Kirkbride

Take the road out of Abbeytown and turn left at the crossroads at Raby, having passed over the River Waver and by the entrance to Raby Grange Farm. Continue on the road, keeping left when the B5302 goes right, to pass the driveway to Raby Cote Farm and arrive at the salting where the fenced road bends right(2.5km).

RABY COTE FARM

Raby Cote Farm (private) was originally a Holm Cultram Abbey grange farm, and would have had grazing fields and some desirable arable land. The occupants would have kept watch for the Scots who sailed up the creeks on the tide. The current house, built from stones taken from the abbey, dates from the beginning of the 17th century. On the front wall is a long, late-medieval inscription – built in upside down – which comes from the abbey, as does the shield of Abbot Chambers on a relief panel. On the west front the shield of Edward the Confessor can be seen.

The grange owned some saltpans; Salt Coats farm is soon passed on the Way. Each pan owner would also have held the right to dig peat in order to fire the crystallisation pan.

The route follows the road into the village of Newton Arlosh (3km).

NEWTON ARLOSH

'The new town on the marsh' was built in 1305 to replace the stormdevastated port of Skinburness. It was set up by a charter under Edward I but, due to Scottish raids, the exposed terrain and silting up of the channel, failed to prosper.

The cross-border raids dictated the style of the church, built in 1303–4 with a pele tower adjoining the nave. The church measures less than 9 × 4m, and the tower has massive walls to withstand repeated assaults. The windows of the tower are high and narrow, and there is no outer doorway. At ground level it is a tunnel-vaulted and at the top a turret protects the corbels. On the first floor of the tower, reached by a stone spiral staircase, is a 'priest's room', complete with a large fireplace. Access to the top floor was gained by a ladder. The early 13th-century font comes from Holm Cultram Abbey.

Newton Arlosh church

The main door was only 68cm wide, preventing attackers from rushing in. This also meant that after a wedding the bride and groom had to leave one at a time, giving rise to the story that whoever emerged first would be 'the boss'.

The route follows the road through the village of Newton Arlosh. Branch right at a junction near the Joiner's Arms pub. The straight road bends left where the Solway Junction railway once ran. Go over the bridge, then down to join the fields by the first gate on the left, with a footpath sign to Kirkbride (1.3km).

WEDHOLME FLOW COMMON

Just inland, and partially visible from the bridge, is Wedholme Flow, an extensive area of peat moss that was once cut and sold for a range of horticultural and agricultural uses. Sadly this scarce resource and rare habitat was largely destroyed for commercial gain. Work to restore the common and enhance the conservation value of the site has been undertaken.

Go along the right-hand field ditch, go through the gate and cross the fenced railway track bed ahead. Continue in the same direction through the garden and leave in the far right-hand corner to go right and follow the banking by the ditch. At the end of the left-hand field go left over a stile and turn right. Follow the right-hand field boundary and dyke through several fields and continue as the path cuts right to recross the former railway track bed in the fourth field (850m).

GIBBS MEADOW SSSI

This next stretch of the route is along the boundary of Gibbs Meadow SSSI, so designated because it is herbrich meadowland. Here is a mixture of wet and dry grasslands that were traditionally cut for hay and fen vegetation, found alongside the numerous dykes. The whole site is only 10m above sea level and lies on dark, peaty soils above alluvium.

Continue through the wet meadows near the right-hand boundary, pass nearby to two large World War II aircraft hangers, cross the access road that leads to the hangers, and go ahead to cross a stile by a gate. The path now follows Monk's Dyke on your right (part of a series of reclamation schemes undertaken by the monks) through three fields, and then goes right through a gate by a house. Take the short enclosed lane to emerge on the road in Kirkbride. Go left, and left again at the first junction (signed Silloth) to reach the Bush Inn (1.8km).

KIRKBRIDE

St Bridget was the sister of St Patrick, and 'Kirkbride' is a Celtic inversion of Bridget's church. Situated by the mouth of the River Wampool – which flows into Moricambe Bay – Kirkbride parish contains ancient British, Roman and Anglo-Saxon artefacts. For readers of Sir Walter Scott's *Redgauntlet* it was here that Jumping Jenny landed her smuggled cargo and from where Alan Fairford started his night ride.

Just beyond the Bush Inn bear right to follow Church Road to the interesting St Bride's parish church, built on the highest land in the village (400m).

ST BRIDE'S CHURCH

The church lies on the western edge of the site of a Roman fort (*c.* AD140) which itself lay at the western end of Stanegate, a narrow military zone containing a crosscountry military road complete with forts, fortlets and signal towers. This road was linked with Carlisle and Corbridge, and possibly with an early warning system running westwards towards Cardurnock. Supplies for soldiers on this frontier were possibly shipped via the River Waver. This fort played an important

role during the 2nd century, spanning the last years of Trajan's rule and the first part of Hadrian's.

Kirkbride church

There are some indications that the original churchyard was round, implying that pagan worship took place here in pre-Christian times. The church building is essentially Norman, though built of Roman stones with a chancel arch suggesting Saxon work. As you enter the church there are recesses on either side of the doorway and it is possible that these held massive timbers to barricade the door against Scottish raiders. A walled-up post-Norman 'devil's door' can be seen; evil spirits were thought to flee through this when a child was baptised. Hanging in the chancel arch is a framed, 16th-century Italian plaster panel depicting the Entombment. There are also two Norman windows and an east window depicting three Irish saints: St Bride, St Patrick and St Columba.

STAGE 14

Kirkbride to Carlisle

29.4km (17.9 miles)

Kirkbride to Burgh by Sands

The River Wampool, like the Eden, can have a noticeable tidal bore. The riverside fields, now unattractively fenced, used to be open common land. A bridleway (shown on the OS maps) that goes right just after leaving Kirkbride and runs towards the Wampool is not bridged over the river – there is only a deep ford. This river was likely used by Roman ships for supplying the legionnaires on the western half of Hadrian's Wall.

From the gate to St Bride's Church, cross Church Road and go down an enclosed path to emerge with care on the road below. Turn right on the road, cross Whitrigg Bridge over the River Wampool and go up to the road junction. The main route goes right along the road; ignore the two roads off to the left, and bend right to where the road follows the river. Turn off the road at the second enclosed track, with a footpath sign to Whiteholme and Drumburgh (2km.)

CARDURNOCK PENINSULA ALTERNATIVE ROUTE

This route leads from Kirkbride round the Cardurnock Peninsula to Bowness and on to Drumburgh, a distance of some 20km, and branches left at the road junction after the crossing of the River Wampool. This remote peninsula would be one of the highlights of the walk – with Moricambe Bay and the Solway so close, and with plentiful wildlife to see – if you didn't have to follow the road. There is an RSPB reserve on the Solway at Campfield Marsh, and much of historic interest. The remains of an ancient cross, perhaps medieval, are found behind barbed wire; the communication masts mark the site of one of three local wartime airfields.


Herdhill Scar
Pottery Ho
Herd Hill
West Scar
Biglands Ho
North Plain
Maryland Fm
Campfield Fm
Pasture Ho
Herd Hill
Bowness Common
Rogersceugh
Cardurnock
Anthorn
Cross
Channel of
Beckbro
62
61
60
59
58
57
17
18
20
21
16
24
72

BOWNESS COMMON ROUTE

Another possible route goes across the middle of the Cardurnock Peninsula via Rogerscough Farm to join the road south of Bowness. This route – which needs dry weather and some competent map reading – crosses Bowness Common SSSI, but changing water levels, together with the problems of navigating through heather and peat, render this a difficult option. Bowness Common SSSI covers 4000ha and holds many interesting plants; it is another remnant of the once-extensive peat mosses in this area, and is part-owned by the RSPB. Scientists study the local ecological history by examining pollen retained in layers of peat laid down at different times.

This route visits Bowness and Port Carlisle. It also goes over the course of the Solway Junction railway line that once crossed the Solway. This line – a shorter route than that going through Carlisle – was built in the 1860s, mainly to serve the developing iron industries. The viaduct from Bowness to Annan became unsafe after winter ice invaded the hollow iron supports following the branch closure in the 1920s. It was demolished in 1934–5, thus removing a dangerous route for Scottish pedestrians wishing to reach the pub in Bowness (in the days when Scottish pubs were closed on Sundays).

Use the Hadrian's Wall National Trail from Bowness to Port Carlisle and to Drumburgh where you rejoin the Cumbria Coastal Way.

BOWNESS-ON-SOLWAY

The Roman fort here, called Mais or Maia, is said to have been the second largest on Hadrian's Wall. Its site is now occupied by the village. Some village buildings, including the church, were built with masonry reused from the fort, which was situated at the western end of the wall and faced east along it. Construction started under Platorius Nepos in around AD127. The Roman Wall runs almost 70 miles east from Bowness, although there is no standing wall today and very little

of the work is visible west of Carlisle. From Bowness and eastwards Scots raiders came by ford over the Solway.

The Solway saltmarsh near Port Carlisle

St Patrick, patron saint of Ireland, is said to have been born at Bowness-on-Solway in AD386, although the most celebrated saint in north Cumbria at that time was Kentigern.

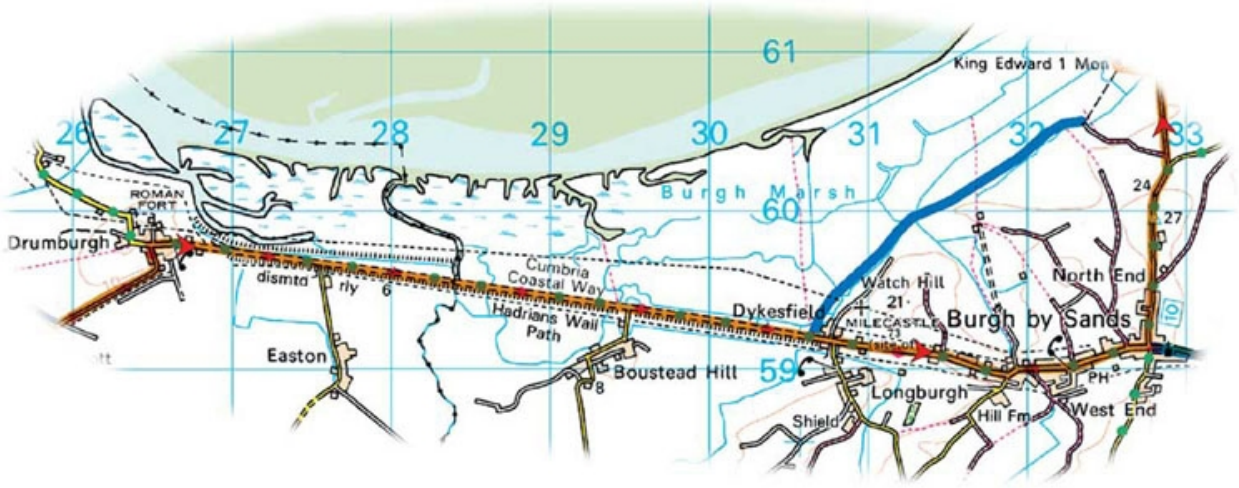
PORT CARLISLE

Port Carlisle was built as a harbour for Carlisle, replacing Sandsfield, near Burgh by Sands (see below), but was itself quickly replaced by Silloth. It was linked to the city by canal in 1823, even though the original intention had been to build the canal to Maryport. In 1854 the canal bed became a railway line. Had other, more ambitious plans for the canal been executed (the original proposal was to build it across the Pennines to Newcastle), the history of this settlement might have been very different. Travllers could reach Port Carlisle by sea from Liverpool in a day and then boats would be towed to Carlisle, a journey of 1 hour 40 minutes. The canal never paid its way, but the canal directors were also Carlisle manufacturers, happy to receive cheap freight rather than dividends.

The fate of Port Carlisle was finally sealed when the Solway Junction railway was built in 1869. Up to 1914 the railway was operated by a horse-drawn Dandy carriage, an example of which may be seen in York National Railway Museum. Steam trains then ran to Port Carlisle until 1932. The original settlement here was called Fishers Cross. There is some fine Georgian architecture in the Port Carlisle Conservation Area, and some of the houses are listed.

DRUMBURGH

This small village – pronounced Drumbruff – lies on Hadrian's Wall, and some signs of the vallum (ditch) can be detected. Drumburgh Castle, now a house, was rebuilt in 1558 by Lord Dacre to replace a pele tower of 1307 which used stones from the Wall. Thomas Leyland described the site as a 'pretty pyle for the defns of the contery'. Like other border strongholds it saw its share of action when the Solway was a frontier between two separate nations. The house was completely repaired in 1681 and is the most likely contender for 'Whiteladies' in Sir Walter Scott's novel *Redgauntlet*.



Turn right along the road, using the verge, with the salting and the River Eden to your left. This long straight stretch passes Boustead Hill, to your right, before the road leaves the marsh and continues to Burgh by Sands and the crossroads near the huge church tower (6.5km).

Note It is possible to turn left at the end of the open common and follow the edge of the common round to rejoin the route at the Edward I monument. This may be shorter but should be avoided at high water; it also misses out the superb church, the pub and some traditional clay daubin buildings (see below).

BURGH MARSH

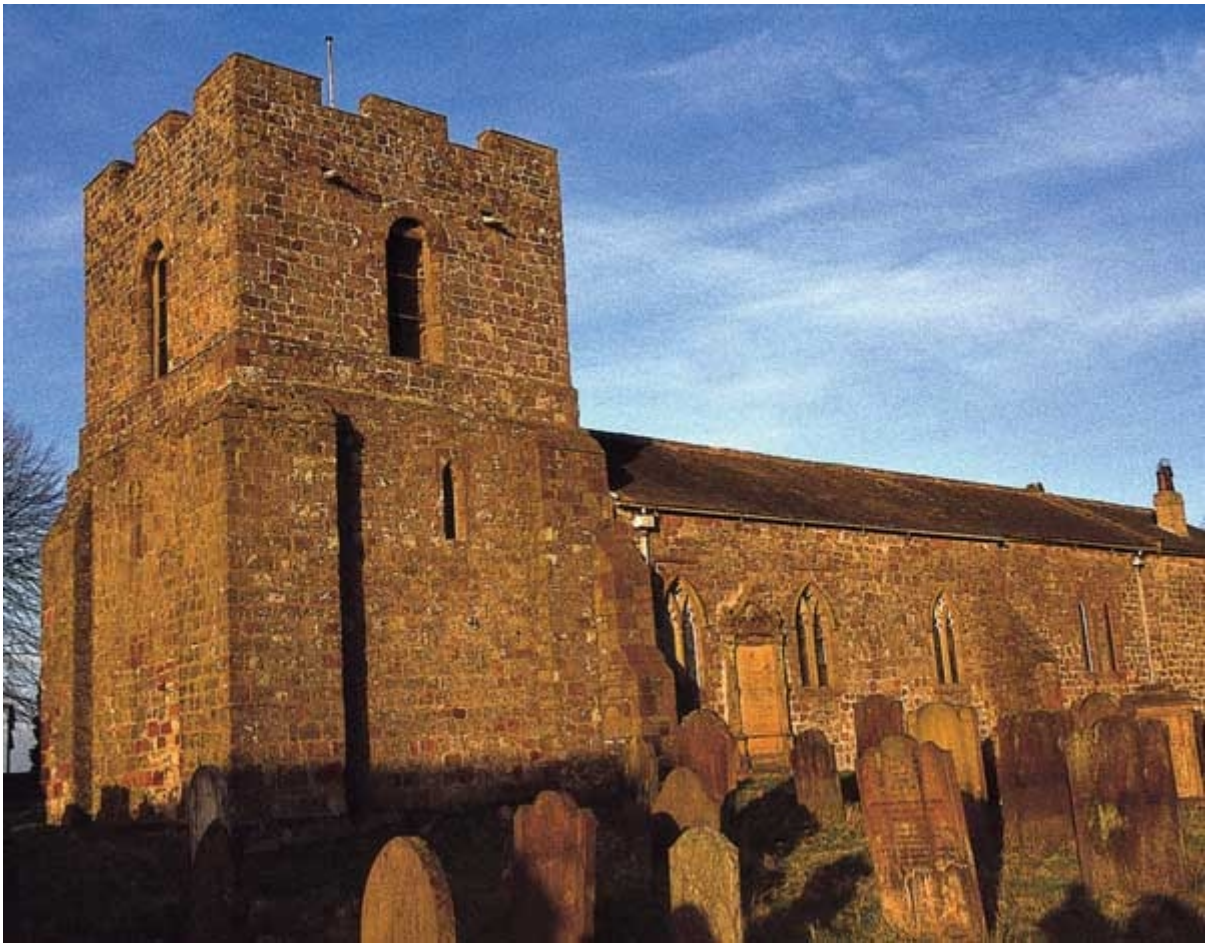
The belt of salting fringing the Solway consists of salt-marsh and slightly higher merse (land not covered by the sea except at very high tides). There is a gradual transition from estuarine silt to sea-washed turf for which the county is famous. Terraces reveal the changes in sea level over the centuries.

The salting provides good grazing for cattle and sheep, and is often used for overwintering Lakeland fell flocks. The farmers send hoggs (sheep in their first winter) and sometimes breeding ewes to this milder climate. The marsh is an important area for birds and the need to avoid disturbing the roosts, especially at times of high tides, is paramount. Horse racing took place on the marsh on a regular basis from 1690 (when a new Earl of Lonsdale inherited the title) until 1900, the most fiercely contested races being for the Barony Cup. National Hunt racing took place from 1882.

BURGH BY SANDS

The village sits on the site of the Roman fort of Aballava, built by Nepos around AD122–6 and covering some 20ha. The soldiers favoured the Roman god Hercules, as evidenced by the number of dedications on altars that have been found. The church has a heavily fortified pele tower built from Roman masonry. The tower is 14th-century and entered by a small iron-framed door. Edward I lay in state here after he died on Burgh Marsh in 1307, and this event is depicted in a church window.

The traditional buildings of estuary-side settlements were clay daubins (or dobbin). Due to a general lack of other materials buildings consisted of wooden crucks and walls made with clay, supporting a thatched roof, cheap and readily constructed. Lamonby Farm in the village is an elaborate example.



Burgh by Sands church

Burgh by Sands to Beaumont

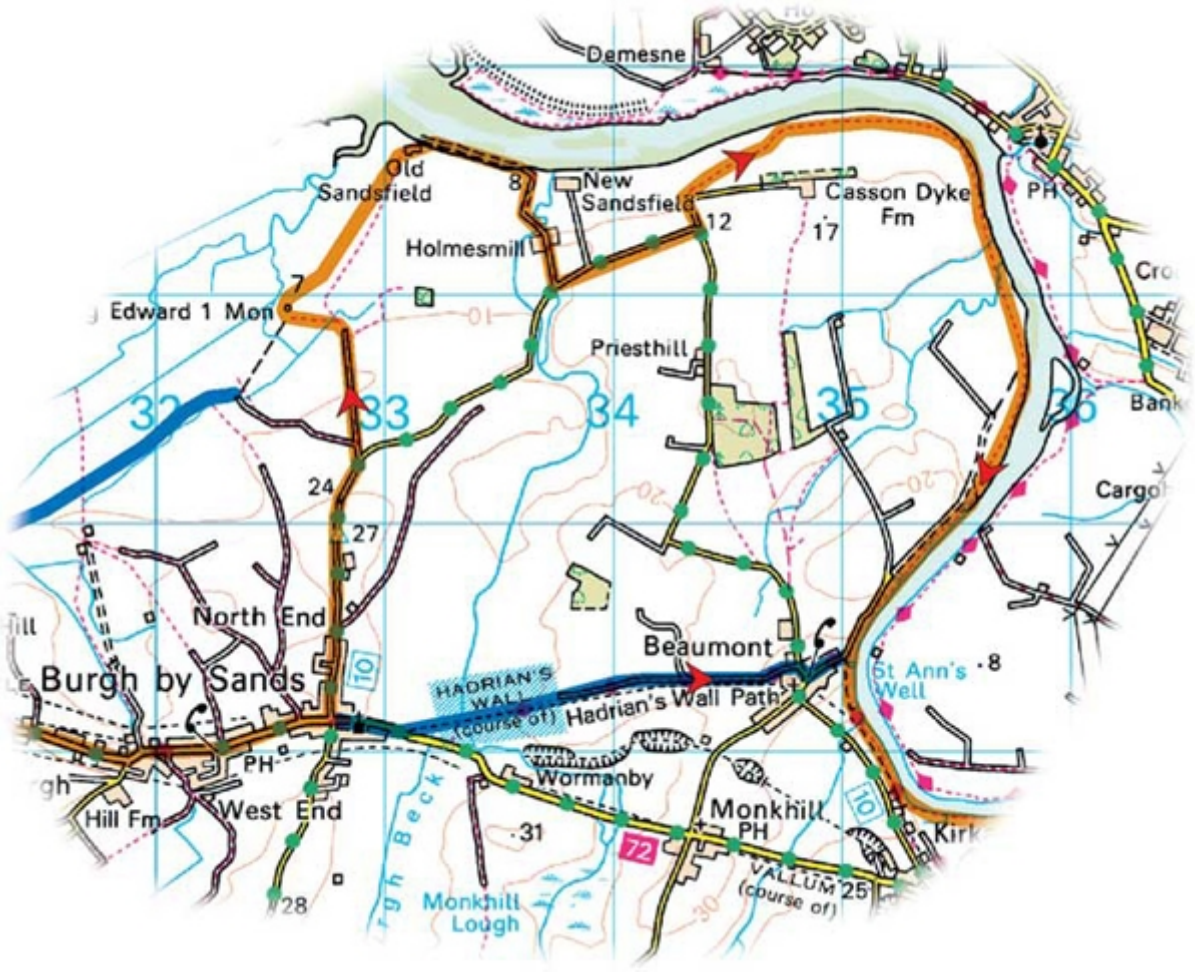
Hadrian's Wall National Trail takes a short route to Beaumont (2km), missing a superb section of the Solway estuary and River Eden. The OS map shows the Coastal Way on the line of the National Trail. From the crossroads by the church go north on the lane, signposted to Sandsfield, and follow the road (for just over 1km) until it descends slightly and turns to the right. Leave the road by the

lane on the left and take the right-hand branch signed to the Edward I memorial. Go down this enclosed lane, with the monument in sight, cross the stile onto the salting and go to the monument (1.8km).

EDWARD I MONUMENT

This marks the spot where Edward I died whilst encamped on his way to 'hammer the Scots' in 1307. He was 68 and, for this campaign, was based at Holm Cultram. The campaign was in response to the rebellion of Robert the Bruce and his coronation at Scone in 1306. The camp was a base from which the army would cross the estuary. The monument, erected in 1685 by the Duke of Norfolk, fell down in 1795 and has been rebuilt on several occasions. Edward was eventually buried in Westminster Abbey.

Leave the monument to follow the salting northwards, keeping near to the right-hand field boundary and, turning right over a stile near the gate, arrive at Old Sandsfield Farm, perched on the edge of the River Eden (1km).



SANDSFIELD

Haaf net fishermen can often be seen at work in the esturary. This method, using hand-held rigid-pole nets, probably dates from Viking times. The monks of Holm Cultram held the rights to one net during the 12th century, and in 1234 were allowed to build a house at Old Sandsfield. This became the first port for Carlisle and was a munitions port for Edward I. A ford route came ashore here.

The port declined following a storm in 1796, before which ships of 80 tonnes could reach it. The trade was mainly imported timber, iron, flax, tar, rice and mercantile goods, with a smaller export trade of wheat, butter and alabaster. Such a misty, remote location made the port an obvious base for smuggling.

Old Sandsfield was the likely location of the 1216 Peatwath crossing when around 2000 retreating Scots were drowned after their raid on Holm Cultram Abbey.

This next section of the Way is a good place for observing the tidal bore as it chases rapidly up the river; take care, since sometimes it comes over the bank.

Continue along the shore in front of the house, then follow the track inland to meet the metalled road after passing through the farmyard and along the access track at Holmesmill. Turn left along the road, and left again at the junction where the main lane goes to the right. When this road bends sharp right, go through the kissing-gate and enter the riverside salting. A footpath sign points to Beaumont (2km).

Go half-right towards a noticeable footbridge, crossing another smaller bridge largely hidden by gorse en route, and then

continue to cross the stile by the riverbank. The riverbank path continues close to the edge of the river to reach a large footbridge where Rockcliffe can be seen on the far bank (1.6km).

Once over this bridge go slightly away from the riverbank to cross a stile and a further footbridge with a distinctive marker pole. Start parallel to the river to follow a reasonably distinct track that leads to a field corner on your right. Keep near the right-hand boundary, then strike slightly left to cross a footbridge. Keep to the path nearest to the riverbank and eventually strike up some steps to the road. Go left on the road to reach Beaumont church and village centre; note where the footpath goes off left, sign-posted as part of Hadrian's Wall National Trail (2.2km).

BEAUMONT

Beaumont, pronounced Beemont, means 'beautiful hill', in this case a small hill occupied by St Mary's Church. The village sits on a wooded bluff above the River Eden and was once the site of a Roman milecastle (turret).

The church is late Norman, built using Roman masonry, and although greatly altered by two 19th-century restorations still retains the simplicity of a dale church. The walled-in east end has three small windows, and the chain on the font cover is weighted with a lead-cast dove. There are two 15th-century grave slabs at the western end. In spring the churchyard is full of snowdrops and crocus and, later, wild daffodils. The ford nearby is narrow, and was favoured by the Scots as a means of flanking the Carlisle garrison.

Beaumont to Grinsdale

From the church and green go back north to pass the telephone box on the cul-de-sac road from which you have just arrived, and turn right when the path is signed for Hadrian's Wall National Trail. Go through the kissing-gate on your right and follow the path along the wooded bluff, The Heugh. After a section along the riverbank the path climbs some steps and follows the field edge on the course of the Wall. After a kissing-gate the narrow path goes between a house and the wooded bluff to a further kissing-gate (800m).

From here the Hadrian's Wall Trail continues ahead to Kirkandrews-on-Eden before continuing to Grinsdale. This shorter route is some 2km long.

Immediately after this last stile (or kissing-gate) our recommended Coastal Way path (not on OS maps) drops down left to the riverbank and follows the large loop of the River Eden. Keep near to the riverbank all the way, sometimes with a fence to your left. This path goes over a footbridge and several stiles to reach the grounds of Grinsdale church. Continue down the grassy access track to the church and then down the road to reach a gate just after the last (new) houses, to the left (3.2km).

KIRKANDREWS-ON-EDEN

This village is part of Beamount parish but still retains its own parish church, closed in 1692.

The River Eden at Kirkandrews-on-Eden

The churchyard, like that in Beaumont, is a picture in spring, and is still consecrated. This is possibly the site of a Roman milecastle. St Andrew's Well, below the graveyard, is a pleasant spot.

GRINSDALE

Grinsdale is a small village, expanded by new commuter housing, with a superbly situated church on a wooded bluff overlooking the river. To reach the church from the road involves crossing two fields, and one presumes that only brides and the departed can go by vehicle. Like Beaumont and Kirkandrews the churchyard is lovely during spring flowering. This is one of a small number of Cumbrian churches dedicated to St Kentigern – a dedication only found in this county. Known also as St Mungo, Kentigern is the patron saint of Glasgow, symbolically associated with the robin and the salmon. It was below this church that Bonnie Prince Charlie crossed the Eden on his way to capture Carlisle.

Grinsdale to Carlisle

From here the route is shared with the Hadrian's Wall National Trail. Go south on the road through Grinsdale and leave it by the kissing-gate adjacent to a gate after the last houses on your left. Follow the footpath, also signed to the River Eden, and go directly ahead to cross a footbridge. Go right in the field, but after some 20m go left and follow along the line of left-hand trees and then a wooded bluff to pass through a kissing-gate in the far left-hand corner. Follow the path along the top of the wooded bluff, descend to a footbridge and climb up to another kissing-gate and into the next field (800m).

Walk along the left-hand boundary, with the Eden below, and then descend to a further footbridge over Knockupworth Gill, and again climb to pass through a further kissing-gate. In the field continue above the river to a kissing-gate in the left-hand fence, opposite the last pylon in the field, then go along by the right-hand fence. Descend to a footbridge, climb the steps, and follow the left-hand fence along a scrub-covered site of railway sidings, until some steps allow you to descend to the riverbank and pass under a former railway bridge (1.6km).

Continue along the riverbank path as the built-up area of Carlisle becomes more apparent. Your route goes under the bridge of the main railway line to Scotland, continues along the Eden and then bears right along the River Caldew from its confluence with the Eden. Go left over the bridge and continue straight ahead along a tree-lined avenue near the Eden, through Bitts Park, to arrive at the Eden Bridge with the Leisure Centre beyond (2km).

To reach the city centre and railway station turn right and go to the right of the tower-block City Hall and through the main shopping street to reach Carlisle railway station (800m).

STAGE 15

Carlisle and on to Gretna

20.1km (12.3 miles)

CARLISLE

Carlisle is a fine northern city with a chequered history, due to its location on the English/Scottish border. Of all English cities it has probably seen the most military action. Famous occupants, such as William Rufus and Mary Queen of Scots, and prisoners, such as Kinmont Willie, have augmented local folklore.

The original city stood on the earth section of Hadrian's Wall. In AD79 Agricola built the first turf-and-timber fort here, Luguvalium. A later stone replacement continued in military use until around AD320. Just northeast of the city centre lay the large fort of Stanwix, Ala Petriona, which housed around 1000 soldiers.

The city fluctuated between English and Scottish control for several centuries. During the 10th century a treaty was signed that incorporated much of northwest Cumbria into Scotland. The Normans did not reach the area until 1092, when William Rufus completed the conquest, and so this part of England is omitted from the Domesday Book of 1086.

The city walls were constructed in the 12th century, in the reign of Henry I. David I of Scotland then wrested Carlisle back for the Scots during the civil war following Henry I's death. He extended the border down to the Duddon, heightened the city walls and built the castle keep. Henry II later gained the city back for England, although the Bishops of Glasgow still claimed some of the area as part of their diocese until the 13th century.

The bloody conflict continued into the 16th century when the raids carried out by the reivers were at their height. Cattle stealing took place between families on both sides of the border and tension increased through inter-family feuds and opposition to lawkeepers.

In the English Civil War the city was a Royalist stronghold and was besieged for nine months, during which time the citizens were reduced to eating horses and rats. In the 17th and 18th centuries Carlisle was a base for successful woollen and cotton manufacturing, and in the 19th century it became a major railway centre.

CARLISLE CASTLE

Construction began in 1092 when William Rufus built a palisade on the hill after he had seized the city, but it was the Scottish King David I who actually laid out the castle with a tower and ditches. In the 16th century Elizabeth I was responsible for many of the repairs and her cousin Mary Queen of Scots was imprisoned here in 1568. During its history the castle has served as a fortress and, for a short time during the border troubles, as a royal palace for Edward I.

On the walls of Carlisle Castle

A Roman altar stone to Jupiter was removed from de Ireby's Tower in the 1980s and is now on display. The tower itself incorporated stone from an earlier tower. The soft sandstone rock enabled prisoners to make engravings in their cell walls

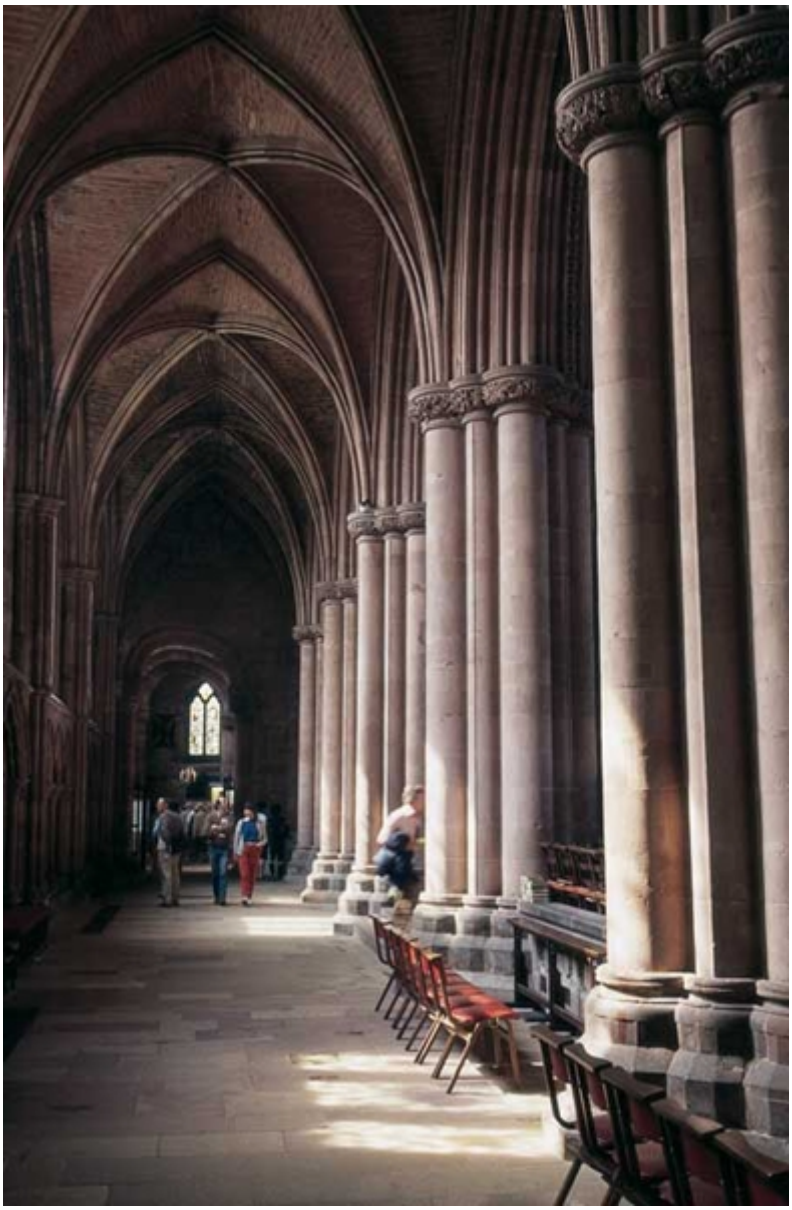
and these, dating from around 1480, can still be seen in the keep. Beside the castle the Border Regiment Museum is housed in Queen Mary's Tower.

A TOUR OF CARLISLE

From outside the castle go under the road using the subway and emerge by the Tullie House Museum.

On the right you will see the entrance to Tullie House (Carlisle Museum and Art Gallery). A visit to this superb museum is essential for a complete understanding of much of the countryside through which we have already passed. The original Jacobean building is part of the complex and is built over a Roman site. The museum is open all year round and includes displays on the Romans, the reivers, the siege of Carlisle, and local wildlife.

The original house of Tullie House Museum



Interior of Carlisle Cathedral

After your visit to the museum – which can take up a good few hours – leave by the gardens in the southwest corner and turn left into Abbey Street. Pass the abbey gateway to view an imposing section of the city walls, and return to Prior Slee's gateway.

Through here, enter the cathedral precinct and go past the Old Registry (1699) and the front of the Deanery. Permission to visit the latter building, with its remarkable ceiling of painted panels, can be sought in the cathedral.

Carlisle Cathedral was once a monastery. Although its stones were used to strengthen the castle during times of strife, the building still retains some of its original Norman fabric. An Augustinian priory was established here in 1133 and completed in 1419. After the dissolution of the priory in 1540 the cathedral church was rededicated. In 1645 there was further demolition to augment the city fortifications.

Although it is one of England's smallest cathedrals, Carlisle has seen its share of history. Here Edward I excommunicated Robert the Bruce with 'bell, book and candle'. The cathedral has a 14th-century east window, claimed as the finest in Europe, and carved misericords dating back to 1400. The Prior's Tower, which can be visited, is a 15th-century pele tower. The Cathedral Treasury Museum displays Viking, Celtic and early Christian artefacts, bishops' copes and historic church plate.

Leave the cathedral precinct by the southwest exit to go to the city walls and Sally Port.

The Sally Port gateway was used by Royalist soldiers when they raided the Roundhead army during the civil war. Earlier it may have been a place where goods were delivered to the medieval tithe barn (the tithe being one tenth of each person's income, usually rendered to the Church in the form of goods or grain).

Across the road go left to St Cuthbert's Church.

This church was built in 1788 and is named after the Bishop of Carlisle from AD686. There has been a church on this site ever since the time of St Cuthbert's visit. The pulpit (1905) is mounted on rails, and is moved into the centre of the aisle when the sermon is given.

From St Cuthbert's Church go through the narrow street to the Market Square where the Guildhall lies on your left.

The Guildhall, dated 1407, now houses a museum which displays the city's stocks and pillories, along with antiquities from various trade guilds. The house is timber-framed, and painted figures on the eaves are said to ward off bad luck.

Just beyond the Guildhall can be found the old town hall, market cross and square.

The old town hall is now the TIC. The market cross was erected in 1682 on the site of the Roman forum, and public proclamations are still made from its steps.

Continue down English Street, past the Citadel at the edge of the city walls; the railway station is found just beyond. The castle is some 1.3km from the station.

The Citadel, originally built as a fort by Henry VIII in 1541, was the southern gateway into the city. It last saw action in 1745 when its cannon were used by the Scots against the Duke of Cumberland's forces. It was rebuilt in 1810 to become the city's courthouse. Notice the old toll board where people were charged for the right to bring goods into Carlisle.

Carlisle to the Esk Bridge and Gretna

This last stage takes you on to the land of the original Solway, for the walk now runs near the Sulwath. The River Eden is a good spot for birdwatchers.

Go back to the rear of the castle and follow along near the river, through Bitts Park, to the main road bridge over the River Eden, near the Sands Leisure Centre. Cross the Eden by the bridge and on the far bank go left down a tarmac path adjacent to the cricket ground entrance. Bear left and, at the path junction above the ski slope, bear left and walk down to Hyssop Holme Well. After the well, on your right, continue straight ahead, then via the riverbank path, until the path eventually climbs to the road, Etterby Scaur. Follow the pavement left and take the first left-hand turning in front of the Redfern Inn into Etterby Road (1.9km).

Go down the full length of Etterby Road, over the railway line and then, when Stainton Road bends off to the right, go left through a gate and down the track, via Wath Cottage, to a further gate and kissing-gate. The path now follows the river embankment. Continue under the right-hand arch of the former railway bridge (1.1km).

The path now follows the bank of the river through long, sometimes narrow fields. The path (and river) meanders, and reaches a field opposite Grinsdale via a series of stiles, from where its isolated church can best be seen (2.5km).

Continue along the path, hugging the left-hand river meander, before climbing steeply through one field, up to a stile that places you on the landward side of a small wooded bluff by a left-hand fence. Go over a further stile and descend to cross a footbridge, and rejoin the riverbank path (1.3km).

At very high water, especially after heavy rain and high tides, this stretch can be waterlogged, especially around Rockcliffe.

From here the path virtually follows the riverbank all the way to Rockcliffe.

However, as you near Rockcliffe, you need to keep nearer to the right-hand boundary of the rougher area of vegetation to find the footbridges over feeder streams. A series of stiles, footbridges, and a small car park used by anglers are passed. The last field, by Rockcliffe, can also flood. The path goes past the cricket field to a stile and footbridge to join a road at the far end of the village, just before the riverside cliffs and the sandstone Eden Benchmark sculpture –'Global Warming' by Anthony Turner, a series of commissioned sculptures 'from source to sea' along the River Eden – is reached (5km).

The River Eden below Cargo

ROCKCLIFFE

Here, as in a few other places, the River Eden has cut small, red sandstone cliffs. Go to the road adjacent to the houses. Rockcliffe church, dedicated to St Mary, was built in 1848 but the churchyard contains a fine fragment of an ancient cross with a solid wheelhead and dragon decoration.

Follow the road to your left to climb past the houses that back onto the riverbank cliffs. Continue until the road bends to the right by some farm buildings. Go down a track, and cross the stile by a gate, to reagain the riverbank on your left. Keep near the right-hand boundary of the salting, pass below Castletown House, and then continue by the right-hand low sandstone wall and then alongside a field to descend to a gate just beyond the white-painted Demesne Farm (1.3km). The views south to the Lake District's northern fells, the 'Back o' Skiddaw', the Solway estuary, Criffel and the northern Pennines provide a wonderful backdrop during this stage.

CASTLETOWN HOUSE AND ROCKCLIFFE MARSH

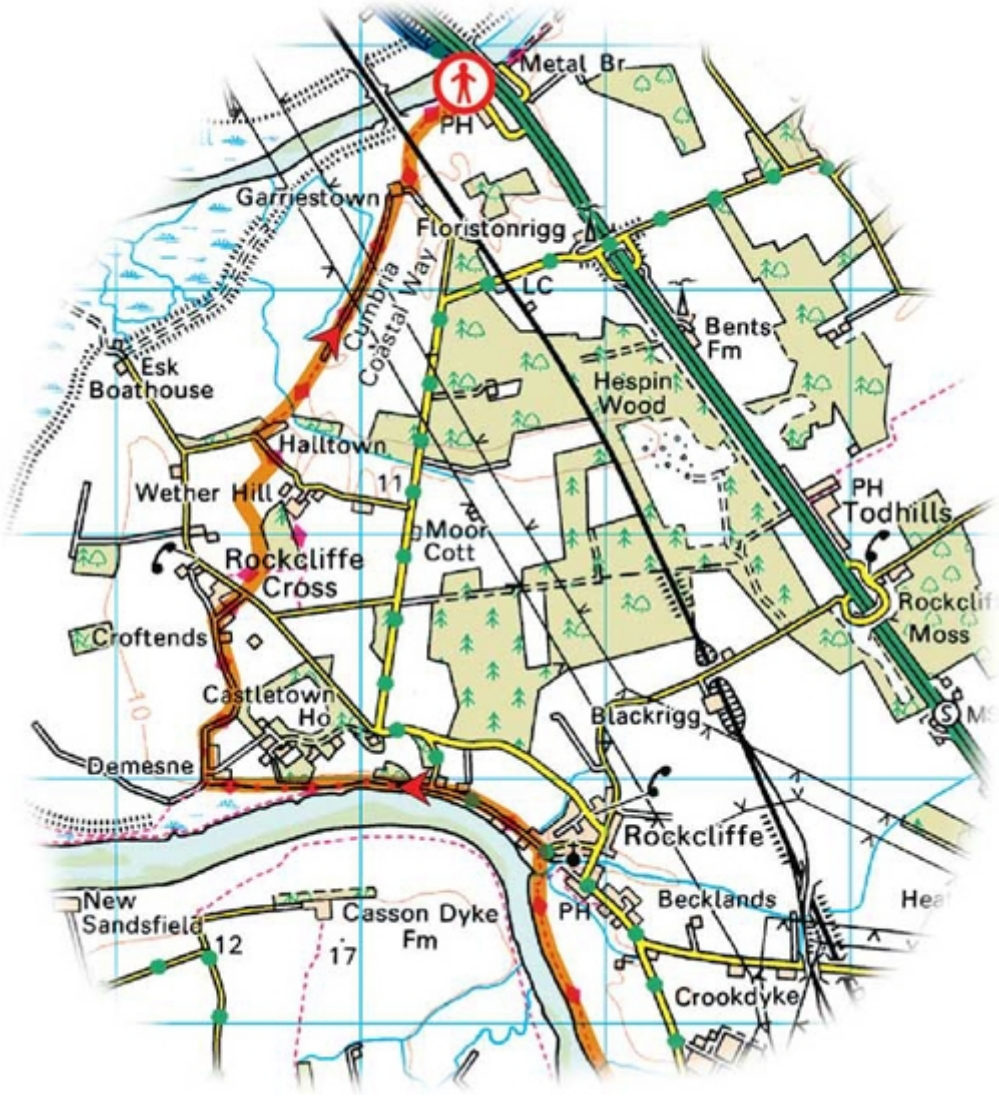
Castletown House merited inclusion in Pevsner's *Buildings of England* series. He described the house, built in 1831, as 'a fine ashlar faced Grecian house' with 'a good interior'. Private visits can be arranged by telephoning 01228 674205 in advance. To our west lies Rockcliffe Marsh, a huge area of salting that did not exist in the 14th century, evidence of the constantly changing coastline. In winter pinkfoot and barnacle geese gather here to graze turf.

The Eden benchmark sculpture at Rockcliffe, 'Global Warming' by Anthony Turner

Through the gate turn right to go through the next gate and continue along the track, keeping the farmyard buildings to your right. The track becomes the farm access road and then a metalled lane that leads you to a T-junction of minor roads at Rockliffe Cross (800m).

Go left on this next road, and after some 70m enter the field on your right by a stile (with footpath sign). Go along the left-hand boundary of the field to cross the stile on your left by the near corner of a wood. In the next field walk down the long boundary of the wood on your right. In the field corner continue around the top boundary and along the top edge to cross a stile some 100m from the top left-hand corner. Go along the right-hand hedge to a stile and the road (800m).

Go left on the road and shortly after Halltown Farm, on your right, the road bears left. Cross the stile by the footpath sign on your right, go down into the wooded area, turn right and follow below farm buildings to cross a stile, track and facing stile. Continue, parallel to farm buildings, to cross the field to a facing stile and footbridge. Over these enter the wood, and cross diagonally left to re-enter a field by a stile. Follow the left-hand hedge to pass through a gate in the far left-hand field corner and gain access to an enclosed lane (600m).



Go down this lane, ignoring any tracks crossing your way, towards Garriestown Farm. Just short of the farm-stead is a stile to your right. Cross this and follow the left-hand boundary past the front of the house and then bend left to a gate and the farm access track.

Go left on the track and almost immediately left again, over the stile by the gate, to follow the enclosed track and then cross the railway line by a footbridge. The path then follows the bank of the Esk. To reach Metal Bridge Inn go over the stile on your right, short of the inn, and follow the short enclosed path as it bends to go alongside the right-hand edge of the pub car park (500m).

ESK BRIDGE OR METAL BRIDGE

Metal Bridge Inn derives its name from the earlier bridge designed by the Scottish engineer Thomas Telford and erected in 1815. A plaque commemorates this bridge, but Cumberland County Council replaced it with a concrete one in 1920. The current bridge carrying the A74 over the River Esk is due to be replaced by a motorway bridge.

Metal Bridge, named after the earlier bridge over the River Esk, just south of the border with Scotland

The River Esk is in many ways a watershed. Until 1552, it marked the boundary with Scotland. The area between here and the River Sark, the current national boundary, was referred to as 'The Debatable Land', despite the fact it was not claimed by England until the 15th century. This region was extremely lawless during the time of the border reivers. Peat extraction takes place on the Solway Moss, the site of a battle in 1542.

THE SULWATH

The Sulwath was a ford over the River Esk used from prehistoric times until the Esk was first bridged, and a meeting place where border law was enforced. Its exact position is somewhat uncertain due to the changing channels and salting. Esk Boathouse, 1.6km downstream from Metal Bridge, is one possible location, as is the famous Lochmaben Stone, the remains of a stone circle, to the southwest of Gretna. Certainly the stone was a site where, in the Middle Ages, border wardens met to seek redress from cross-border raids.

Bloody cranesbill with lady's bedstraw

You can get a bus back from Metal Bridge to Carlisle; the bus shelter is on the southbound side of the A74. Purists have to make their way along by the A74 to the River Sark and into Scotland.

Current work to upgrade the A74 to the motorway may affect this route

There is a footbridge over the Esk on the nearside of the road bridge, then the route lies mostly alongside the A74. The old

road goes off left to Sark Bridge and Scotland, thus sparing you proximity to the traffic for the last stretch (3.5km).

Gretna has a railway station a further 1.3km from the River Sark, and a bus service to Dumfries and Carlisle.

As this book was being completed we continued to hear of species of plants and animals being recorded in Cumbria for the first time – some of these in places traversed by the Cumbria Coastal Way. We keep researching sections of the Way and still make new discoveries. The route is, to us, a never-ending source of enjoyment – we hope your experiences along it are equally pleasurable.

APPENDIX I:
Useful Information and Contacts

BBC Radio Cumbria
☎01228 592444
www.bbc.co.uk/cumbria
The station operates on VHF 96.1 in the south of the county, and 95.6 in the north

Cumbria County Council
The Courts
Carlisle CA3 8NA
☎01228 606060 (for information on footpaths outside the National Park contact Capita Symmonds on 01228 673000)
www.cumbria.gov.uk

Cumbria Wildlife Trust
Plumgarths
Crook Road
Kendal LA8 8LX
☎01539 816300
www.cumbriawildlifetrust.org.uk

Environment Agency
☎08708 506506
www.environment-agency.gov.uk

Friends of the Lake District
Murley Moss
Oxenholme Road
Kendal LA9 7SS
☎01539 720788
www.fld.org.uk

Lake District National Park Authority
Murley Moss, Oxenholme Road
Kendal LA9 7RL
Tel. 01539 724555 (for rights of way inside the National Park)
www.lake-district.gov.uk

Guide to the Leven Sands: Ray Porter
Leven House
Canal Foot
Ulverston LA12 9EL
☎01229 580935

Guide to the Kent Sands: Cedric Robinson
Guides House
Cart Lane
Grange-over-Sands LA11 7AF
☎01539 534026 (TIC)

Natural England
Murley Moss
Oxenholme Road Kendal LA9 7RL
☎01539 792800
www.naturalengland.org.uk

Local newspapers
Barrow Evening Mail (Mon–Sat eve)
Cumberland News (Fri).
News and Star (Mon–Sat eve)
West Cumberland Times and Star (Fri)
Westmorland Gazette (Fri)
Whitehaven News (Thurs)

Tourist Information Centres

Barrow-in-Furness
Forum 28
Duke Street
Barrow LA14 1HU
☎01229 874784
Email: touristinfo@barrowbc.gov.uk

Broughton-in-Furness
The Square
Broughton
☎01229 716115
Email: broughton-tic@southlakeland.gov.uk
Carlisle
The Old Town Hall
Carlisle CA3 8JH
☎01228 512444
Email: tourism@carlisle-city.gov.uk
Grange-over-Sands
Victoria Hall
Main Street
Grange LA11 6PT
☎01539 534026
Email: grangetic@southlakeland.gov.uk
Kendal
The Town Hall
Highgate
Kendal LA9 4DL
☎01539 725758
Email: kendaltic@southlakeland.gov.uk
Maryport
Maritime Museum
1 Senhouse Street
Maryport CA15 6AB
☎01900 813738
Email: maryporttic@allerdale.gov.uk
Millom
Station Road
Millom
☎01229 774819
Email: millomtic@copelandbc.gov.uk
Morecambe
Station Buildings
Marine Road West
Morecambe LA4 4DB
☎01524 582808
www.citycoastcountryside.co.uk
Enail: morecambetic@lancaster.gov.uk
Silloth
The Discovery Centre
Liddell Street Silloth
☎016973 31944
Email: sillothtic@allerdale.gov.uk
Ulverston
Coronation Hall
County Square
Ulverston LA12 7LZ
☎01229 587120
Email: ulverstontic@southlakeland.gov.uk
Whitehaven
Market Hall
Market Square
Whitehaven CA28 7JG
☎01946 695678
Email: tic@copeland.gov.uk
Workington
Central Car Park
Washington Street

Workington CA14 3AW
☎01900 606699
Email: workingtontic@allerdale.gov.uk

APPENDIX II:
Route Summary

Section	Stage	From/to	km	miles
1	1	Silverdale to Arnside	11.1	6.9
	1	Arnside to Grange-over-Sands	23.7	14.7
	2	Grange-over-Sands to Ulverston	28.3	17.3
	3	Ulverston to Barrow-in-Furness	23.9	14.6
2	4	Barrow-in-Furness to Broughton-in-Furness	23.8	14.5
	5	Broughton-in-Furness to Millom and Silecroft	23.5	14.3
3	6	Silecroft to Muncaster and Ravenglass	22.1	13.5
	7	Ravenglass to Seascale	9.3	5.7
4	8	Seascale to St. Bees	13.8	8.2
	9	St. Bees to Whitehaven	11.0	6.5
	10	Whitehaven to Workington	12.5	7.6
	11	Workington to Maryport	9.8	6.0
5	12	Maryport to Silloth	18.8	11.5
	13	Silloth to Kirkbride	26.8	16.4
	14	Kirkbride to Carlisle	29.4	17.9
	15	Carlisle towards Gretna	20.1	12.3
		TOTAL	**307.8**	**187.9**

APPENDIX III:
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Most churches along the way have good guidebooks. The BBC Radio Cumbria website is a good starting point for information about points of interest along the walk.

BRITISH ISLES CHALLENGES, COLLECTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

The End to End Trail
The Mountains of England and Wales
1 Wales & 2 England
The National Trails
The Relative Hills of Britain
The Ridges of England, Wales and Ireland
The UK Trailwalker's Handbook
The UK's County Tops
Three Peaks, Ten Tors

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Unjustifiable Risk?

UK CYCLING

Border Country Cycle Routes
Cycling in the Peak District
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Mountain Biking in the Lake District
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The Lancashire Cycleway

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Backpacker's Britain

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Ben Nevis and Glen Coe
North to the Cape
Not the West Highland Way
Scotland's Best Small Mountains
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The Ayrshire and Arran Coastal Paths
The Border Country
The Central Highlands
The Great Glen Way
The Isle of Mull
The Isle of Skye
The Pentland Hills: A Walker's Guide
The Southern Upland Way
The Speyside Way
The West Highland Way
Walking in Scotland's Far North
Walking in the Cairngorms
Walking in the Hebrides
Walking in the Ochils, Campsie Fells and Lomond Hills
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Walking Loch Lomond and the Trossachs
Walking on Harris and Lewis
Walking on Jura, Islay and Colonsay
Walking on the Isle of Arran
Walking on the Orkney and Shetland Isles

Walking the Galloway Hills
Walking the Lowther Hills
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1 Southern, Central and Western Highlands
2 Northern Highlands and the Cairngorms
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Winter Climbs in the Cairngorms
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Backpacker's Britain

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The Dales Way
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The Cleveland Way and the Yorkshire Wolds Way
The North York Moors
The Reivers Way
The Teesdale Way
The Yorkshire Dales Angler's Guide
The Yorkshire Dales

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Walking in Northumberland
Walking in the North Pennines
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Walks on the North York Moors – Books 1 & 2

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Lake District Winter Climbs
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- The Central Fells
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- The Near Eastern Fells
- The North-Western Wells
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The Western Fells
Roads and Tracks of the Lake District
Rocky Rambler's Wild Walks
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North & South
Short Walks in Lakeland
- 1 South Lakeland

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The Cumbria Coastal Way
The Cumbria Way and the Allerdale Ramble
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High Peak Walks
The Star Family Walks
Walking in Derbyshire
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SOUTHERN ENGLAND

A Walker's Guide to the Isle of Wight
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The Cotswold Way
The Greater Ridgeway
The Lea Valley Walk
The North Downs Way
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The South West Coast Path
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The GR5 Trail
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