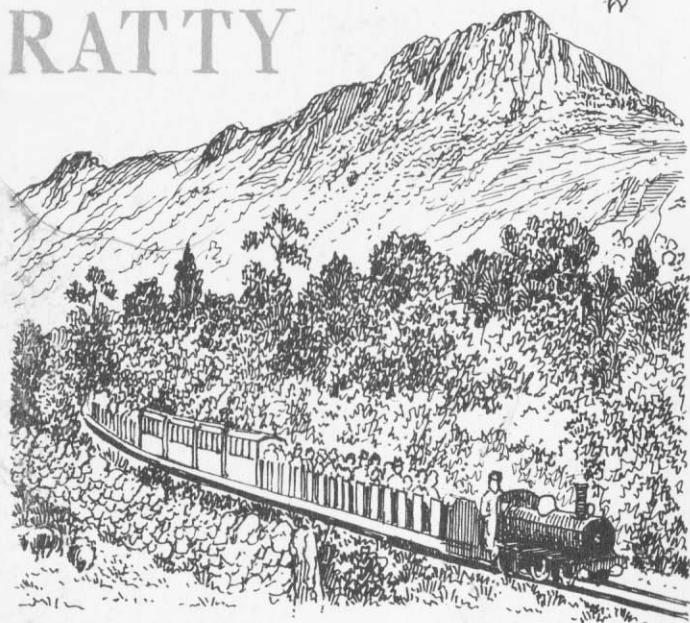


WALKS FROM RATTY



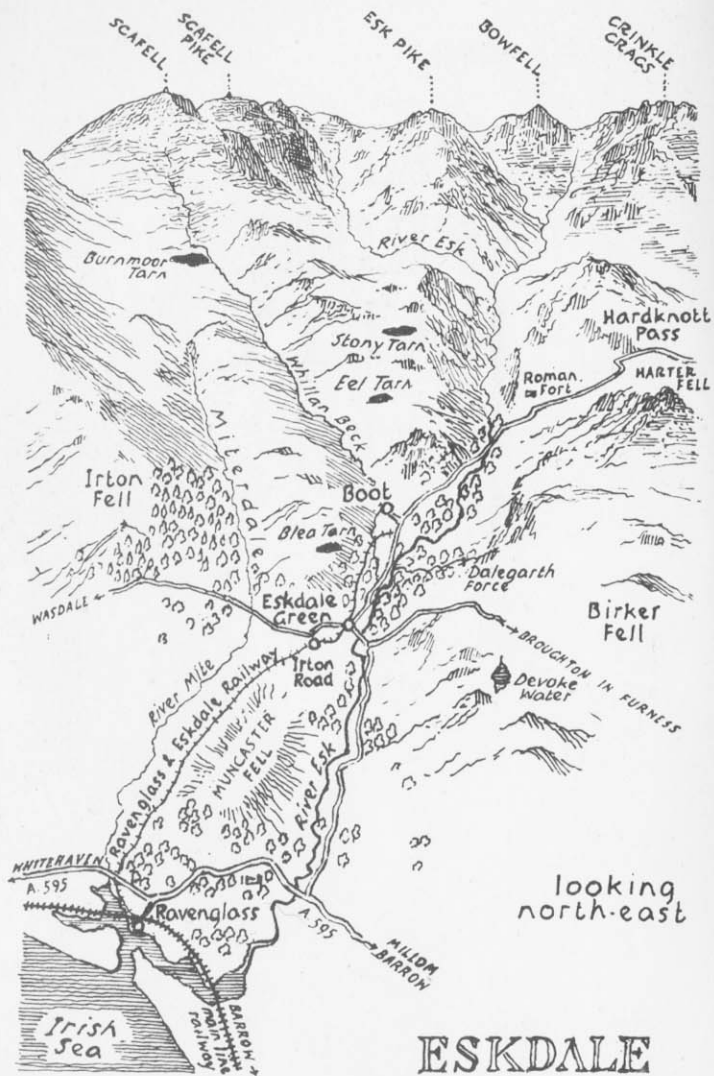
SOME OF THE WALKS
THAT CAN BE ENJOYED BY USING
THE RAVENGLASS AND ESKDALE RAILWAY

Compiled by A. Wainwright

Published by

THE RAVENGLASS AND ESKDALE RAILWAY CO. LTD.

20p

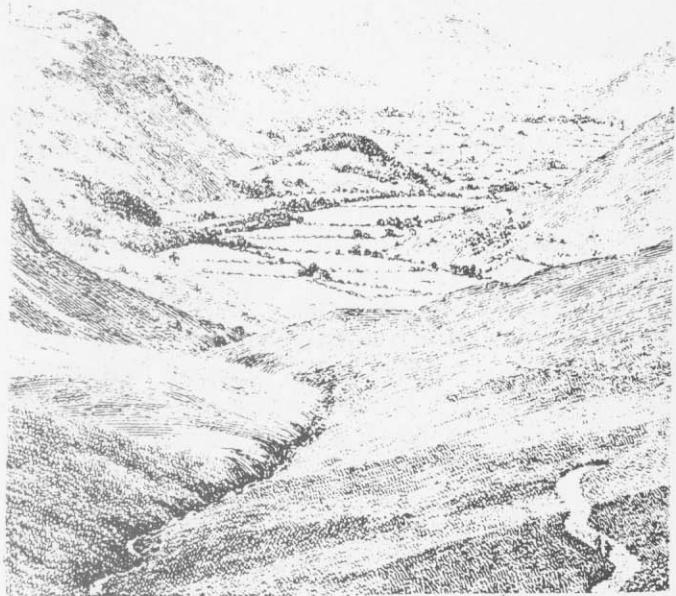


ESKDALE



ESKDALE, one of the loveliest of Lakeland's valleys, descends from the highest and wildest mountains in the district to the sands of Ravenglass in a swift transition from grandeur to beauty, from bleak and craggy ridges to verdant woodlands and pastures watered by a charming river. It is a place of many delights, the finest of all valleys for those whose special joy is to travel on foot and a paradise for artists. Unspoilt by commercial and industrial activity, it remains today little changed since the first settlers discovered and cultivated with loving care this perfect Arcadia in the hills.

But Eskdale's miles are long and public transport services scanty, so that for many walkers the valley was virtually beyond reach until, in 1960, the inspiration and sacrifice and effort of a group of enthusiasts led to the re-opening of the old narrow-gauge railway constructed in 1875 to link the iron mines in the valley with the line at Ravenglass. This act of faith has been rewarded by the support of the public, the railway proving immensely popular. For many of its patrons the delightful journey is pleasure enough; for others it solves the problem of access, serving as a springboard for many lovely walks.



The purpose of this booklet is to describe a few short expeditions made available to walkers by the use of the Eskdale railway and introduce them to a beautiful region of Lakeland they might never visit without its help.

Ten walks are described:

1 : MUNCASTER FELL	pages 6-9
2 : IRTON FELL	10-11
3 : MITERDALE	12-15
4 : BLEA TARN	16-17
5 : BURNMOOR TARN	18-19
6 : EEL TARN	20-21
7 : DALEGARTH FORCE	22-23
8 : A RIVERSIDE WALK	24-25
9 : HARDKNOTT ROMAN FORT	26-28
10 : HARTER FELL	29-32

All these walks are simple rambles, free from hazard, and can be done comfortably between trains, the time allowances given being ample. But all pass, in places, over rough and wet ground that can be ruinous to shoes or sandals or other light footwear. Boots should be worn.

The walks are illustrated by diagrams of the routes (not maps) using the following symbols:

+++++	The Ravenglass and Eskdale Railway						
+++++	The main line railway (British Railways)						
ooooo	stone wall	ooooo	broken wall				
+++++	fence		trees		hedge	▲	cairn
~~~~~	river or beck	+	watersfall	—	bridge		
	crag	o	boulders		marshy ground		
.....	700	.....	contour	.....	unenclosed road		
-----	good footpath	.....	intermittent path				
.....	route recommended but no visible path						

1

# MUNCASTER FELL

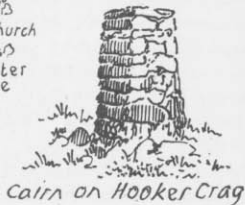
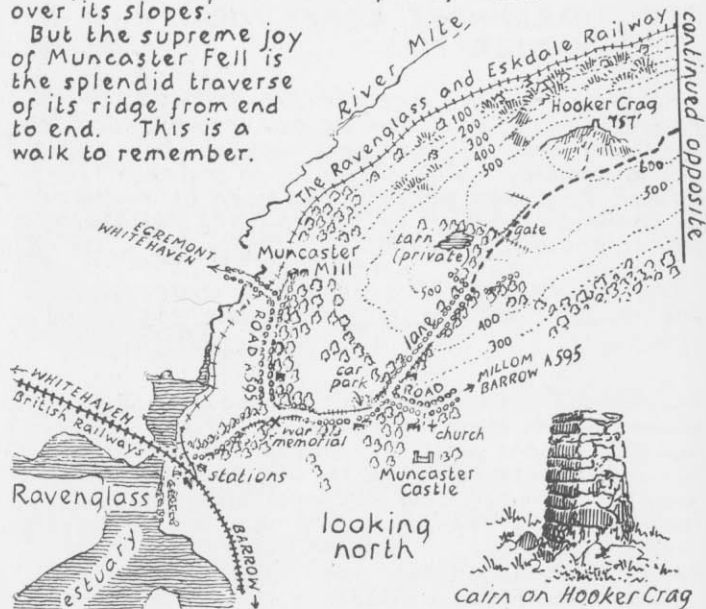
Start at RAVENGLASS

Finish at IRTON ROAD STATION

5 miles. Allow 3 hours

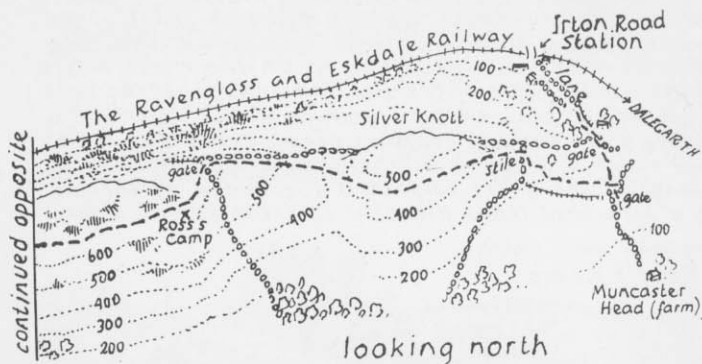
The summit of Muncaster Fell is no more than 757' higher than the estuary at Ravenglass, from which its slopes rise, yet this mountain-in-miniature contrives to give an impression of much greater stature, especially when viewed from the little railway along its base where the steep and rocky flank seems unassailable. Its situation, isolated between the flat pastures of Miterdale and the lower reaches of Eskdale, is magnificent, having an extensive panorama both seawards and inland to the mountains of central Lakeland. Heather and bilberry, gorse and bracken, woodland copse and forest, lay a rich carpet of colour over its slopes.

But the supreme joy of Muncaster Fell is the splendid traverse of its ridge from end to end. This is a walk to remember.



6

Hooker Crag



From Ravenglass village or station an uphill mile of roadwalking, joining and following the A.595 eastwards, leads past the car park and entrance to Muncaster Castle to a bend of the road where two bridlepaths are signposted on the left. Take the one pointing to "Eskdale and Hardknott"; this starts as a straight cart-track up a leafy avenue between walls and rampant vegetation. Ignore a gated path branching off to the right (fire notice). A depression is reached in a rhododendron grove and a barn half-hidden by trees is glimpsed on the left as the track resumes its uphill journey to a gate in a fence.

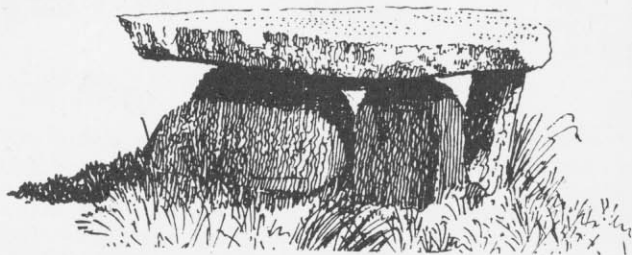
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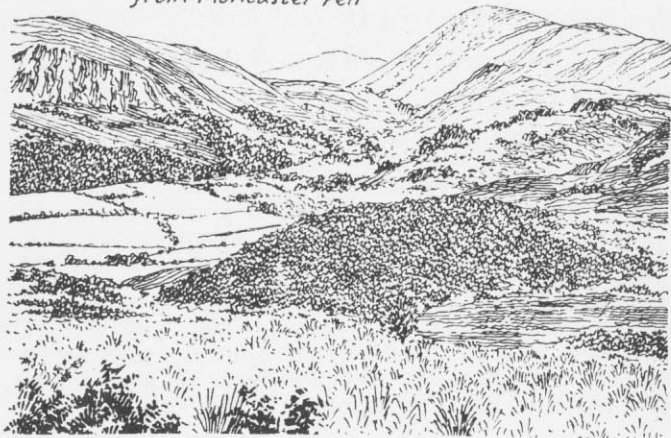
From the gate a fine view unfolds. Directly ahead is seen the Ordnance column on Hooker Crag and a background of mountains. The path goes forward with a fence (enclosing a young plantation) on the left and then veers right to avoid the steep rise to Hooker Crag. (A detour to the summit is rewarded by a glorious panorama ranging from Black Combe to the Isle of Man with the Nuclear Power Station at Windscale an unfortunate intrusion, and including the mountain skyline of the Pillar, Scafell, Bowfell and Conistone groups, all seen over a sea of heather). Continuing along the bridleway a large flat boulder supported by others is reached: this is Ross's Camp, a good viewpoint with a charming prospect up-valley. Beyond, the bridleway swings left to a junction of walls, passing through a gate here and descending to incline across a depression on the right, where after a slight rise there is a long descent, the path here being retained by a granite wall. A stile in a crosswall is used to cross an area of rich vegetation and reach a grass cart-track near a gate. Turn left along it: the grass surface is succeeded by tarmac in a lane that leads directly to Irton Road Station.

### Ross's Camp

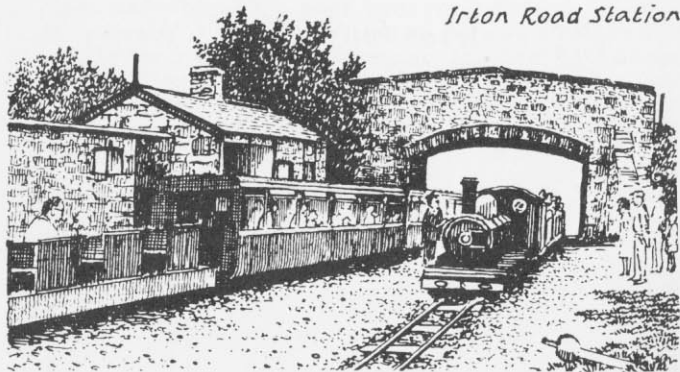


Despite its name and its neolithic appearance this miniature man-made Stonehenge has no military or archaeological significance. It is a monument only to the physical strength of members of a Victorian shooting party who raised the massive flat slab onto other stones to serve as a luncheon table. The top of the slab is neatly inscribed ROSS'S CAMP 1883.

Miterdale and Scafell  
from Muncaster Fell



Irton Road Station



Although the walk is better done in the direction described (in order to have the finest views ahead) it might be advisable in the height of the tourist season when the afternoon trains from Dalegarth are likely to be busy, to first take the train from Ravenglass to Irton Road and reverse the walk.



## 2

## IRTON FELL

Start and finish at IRTON ROAD STATION

An arboreal ramble for lovers of trees.

4½ miles. Allow 3 hours.

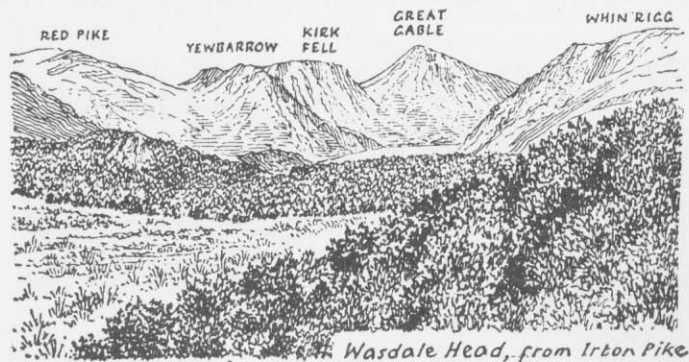
Travelling inland on the miniature railway from Ravenglass, the first prominent rise on the skyline across the pastures of Miterdale is a shapely summit standing naked above a dense cloak of woodland and plantations.

This is Irtton Pike, the abrupt terminus of the high ridge descending from the fells above Wastwater and a worthy objective not only for the charm of its rocky top but also for the excellence of its views. New plantings, however, have restricted access, and most of today's visitors are content to wander on the open ridge adjacent, Irtton Fell.



The royal way to travel for an expedition to Irtton Fell is by the miniature railway to Irtton Road Station. A lane leads from the station to the Eskdale Green road along which turn left for 100 yards and then follow a minor road (no signpost) branching off to the right. A new school is passed and then a complex of buildings (where there was once a mill) before reaching, on the left, a public bridleway sign directing to Irtton Fell 1 and Nether Wasdale 3. This is the path to take, and it is a charmer. A stone bridge over the River Mite is crossed at once and then the path adopts a winding route uphill in natural woodland to emerge on more open ground amongst scattered new plantations on a carpet of heather. The path is generally distinct; if in doubt at junctions keep going uphill. After a mile of ascent the ridge of Irtton Fell is reached at a gate and the path to Wasdale goes forward on open ground with a superb prospect ahead. See this view before turning left along the declining ridge with a wall on the left and Irtton Pike ahead, arriving at a field-gate where a forest fence joins the wall. From here a good track descends to the Santon Bridge road where turn left down to Irtton Road Station.

If determined to visit the summit of Irtton Pike (a detour not recommended if wearing decent clothes) go right from the field-gate and follow the fence to a stile, whence a thin track leads through conifers to the top. The descent to the road beyond, in a dense thicket of trees, is a desperate struggle for survival on a rough, neglected path. This is not a right of way (obviously) and you will have scars to prove it.



Wasdale Head, from Irtton Pike

## 3

## MITERDALE

Start and finish at IRTON ROAD STATION

5½ miles. Allow 3 hours.

Miterdale is a secret valley, little known and unfrequented, the only access for cars being unsignposted and having the appearance of a private drive, so that, happily, few motorists turn into it and it remains a preserve of those who travel on foot.

Yet this is one of Lakeland's sweetest valleys, a hidden retreat deeply inurned amongst hills, where woodland and copse and pasture combine with a delightful river to present a picture of undisturbed rural peace. The remote head of the dale, in a surround of low cliffs shadowed by Scafell, is a sanctuary of great charm.

Recent times have brought changes, not for the better. The highest farm in the valley is a gaunt ruin, walls and paths are neglected. The culprit is afforestation: large plantations of 'foreign' trees now shroud the fellsides formerly grazed by sheep. Only one habitation survives.

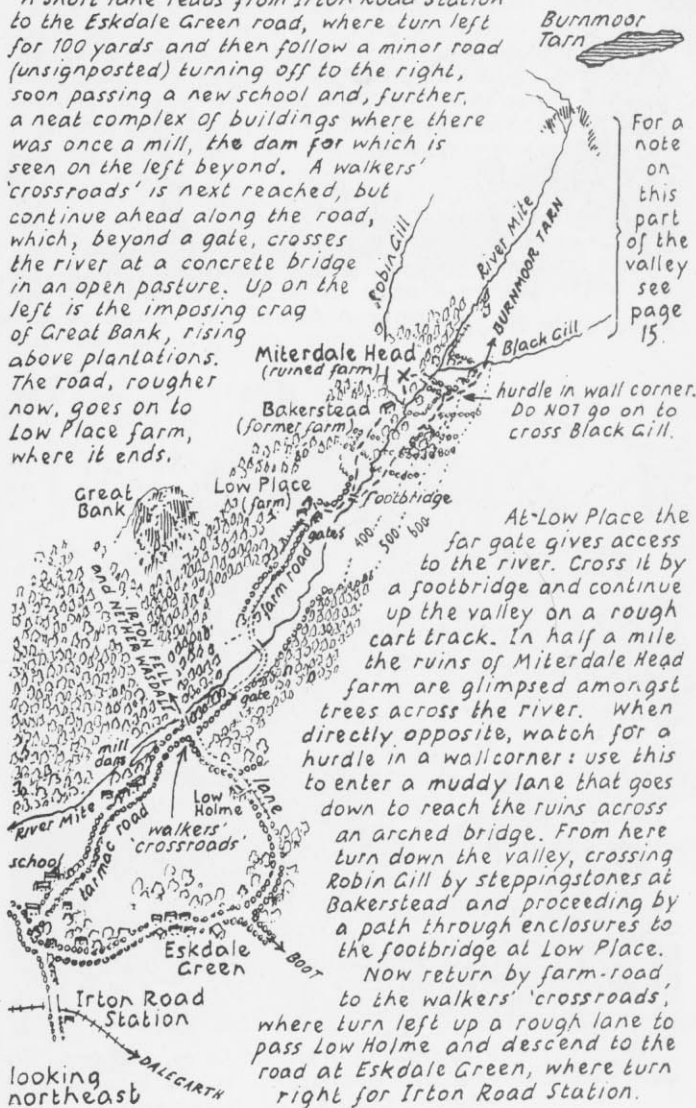
But the valley, although robbed of much of its native appeal, is still a place of seclusion and solitude, and well worth a visit. The walk here described goes as far as the abandoned farm and returns down the valley with variations of route.



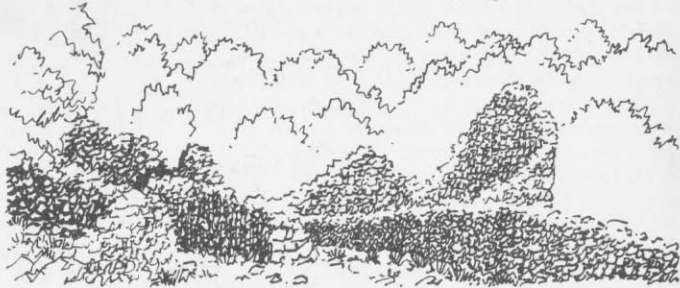
An abandoned farm bridge at Miterdale Head

A short lane leads from Irton Road Station to the Eskdale Green road, where turn left for 100 yards and then follow a minor road (unsignposted) turning off to the right, soon passing a new school and, further, a neat complex of buildings where there was once a mill, the dam for which is seen on the left beyond. A walkers' 'crossroads' is next reached, but continue ahead along the road, which, beyond a gale, crosses the river at a concrete bridge in an open pasture. Up on the left is the imposing crag of Great Bank, rising above plantations. The road, rougher now, goes on to Low Place farm, where it ends.

At Low Place the far gale gives access to the river. Cross it by a footbridge and continue up the valley on a rough cart track. In half a mile the ruins of Miterdale Head farm are glimpsed amongst trees across the river. When directly opposite, watch for a hurdle in a wall corner: use this to enter a muddy lane that goes down to reach the ruins across an arched bridge. From here turn down the valley, crossing Robin Gill by steppingstones at Bakerstead and proceeding to the footbridge at Low Place. Now return by farm-road, to the walkers' 'crossroads', where turn left up a rough lane to pass Low Holme and descend to the road at Eskdale Green, where turn right for Irton Road Station.



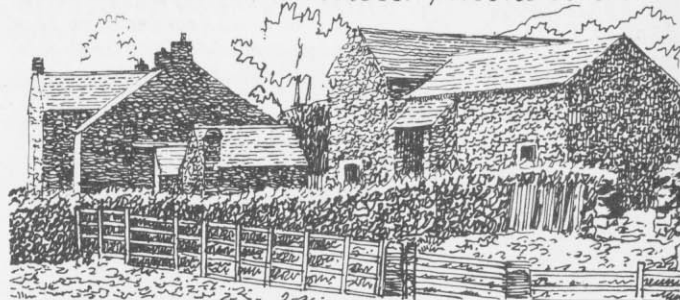
## The Miterdale Farms



Miterdale Head: once a handsome range of farm buildings, now a crumbled ruin



Bakerstead: restored and converted to use as an outdoor pursuits centre



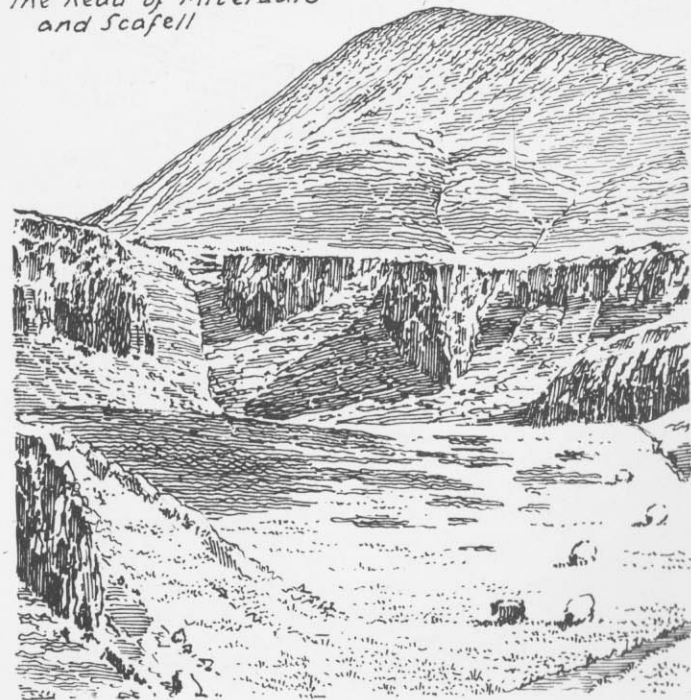
Low Place: a typical Lakeland farm, and the only one still operating in the middle and upper reaches of Miterdale.

Experienced fellwalkers with time and energy to spare can cross Black Gill and continue on a thin track up the valley for a mile and a half (Scafell now towering impressively ahead) to its surprising beginning, formed by a half-circle of cliffs around a secluded amphitheatre: a most delightful place.

Having come thus far, an alternative route of return to Eskdale is handily available by surmounting this final easy obstacle to the open moor beyond, where bear right to skirt Burnmoor Tarn and join the old corpse road leading south to Boot (see Walk 5).

With a bit of luck the last train from Dalegarth station will be waiting to depart when you arrive.

The head of Miterdale and Scafell

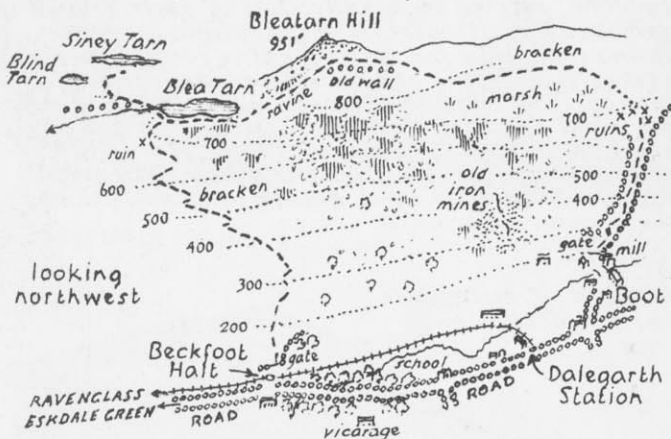




## BLEA TARN

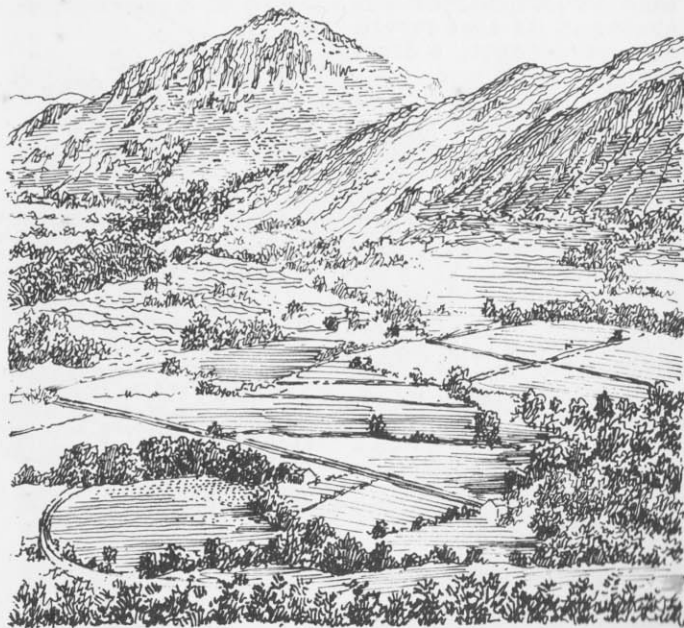
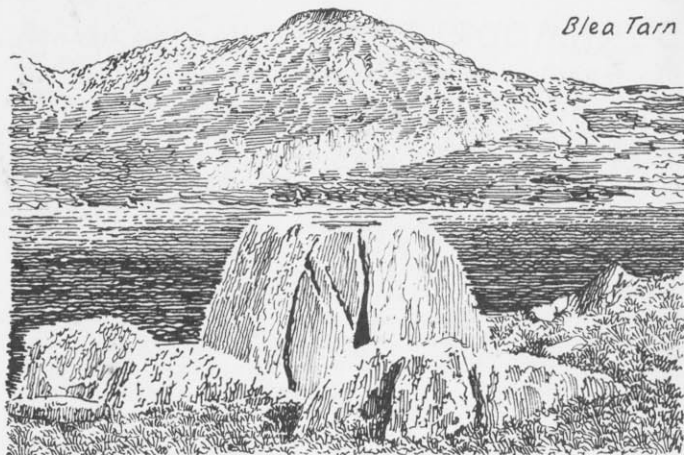
Start: BECKFOOT HALT  
Finish: DALEGARTH STATION

A pleasant fellwalk, initially steep; fine views.  
3 miles. Allow 3 hours.



Cross the railway line at Beckfoot Halt to a gate giving access to the open fell. A charming grass path leads up from the gate, not too distinctly initially but soon becoming clear as it bears left through the bracken; a few hairpin bends ease the gradient. As height is gained there is a delectable view of Eskdale, looking up the valley to Harter Fell. At the top of the slope Blea Tarn comes suddenly into sight, lying in a bowl of grey rock and bracken: a colourful picture. From the outlet a short delour over a low ridge brings two other tarns into view: Blind Tarn and Siney Tarn, less attractive sheets of water although the latter has a rampant display of bogbean. Return to Blea Tarn, there following a path along its south side to ascend a miniature ravine, at the top of which it levels out alongside a crumbled wall before descending slightly and continuing along a pleasant terrace. It becomes indistinct: at this point make a beeline for the ruins now seen down the slope. From them an overgrown lane goes between walls directly down to Boot village and Dalegarth Station is a five-minute walk further.

Blea Tarn



mid-Eskdale, from the path to Blea Tarn

6

## EEL TARN

Start and finish at DALEGARTH STATION

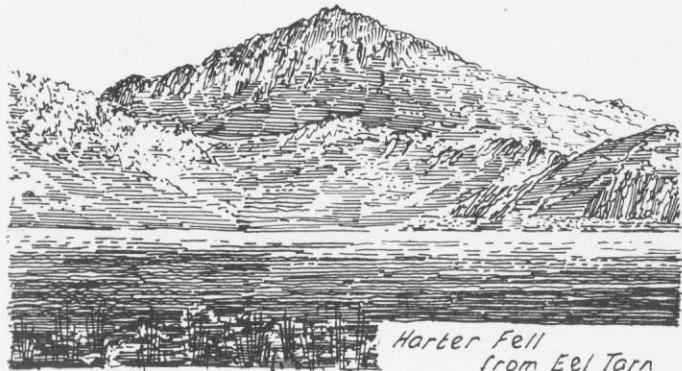
Every step on this lovely walk is a joy.

3½ miles. Allow 3 hours.



The Woolpack Inn

Turn left along the road from Dalegarth Station and left again into the village of Boot. Immediately before the bridge a gated lane on the right (this looks private but isn't) ascends past the waterfalls of Whillan Beck and up the fell (ignore a branch to the right) to the private gated access to Gill Bank farm. 50 yards short of this private gate go through another recessed on the right to join a path ascending to the left. The route, partly between walls, is now clear, passing a prominent monkey-puzzle tree that has shed most of its branches, and then two trees enclosed by a wall, and reaching the open fell, where it continues half-right, at first stony and then as a green path through bracken with views of the Wasdale mountains ahead. Soon after crossing a small beck (the outflow from Eel Tarn) an indistinct junction of paths is reached, identifiable by a boulder with a white cross just beyond. Here turn sharply right up to Eel Tarn, notable for its water lilies in summer. A good path rounds its west side and descends pleasantly to the Woolpack Inn, Harter Fell being a fine object ahead. If time is short, Dalegarth Station can be most quickly reached along the road to the right (one mile). But if there is an hour to spare before the train is due to go, a charming route of return is available by turning left from the road to Doctor Bridge and there taking the riverside path to the church (detailed in Walk 8). A walled lane then leads to the road at Boot, where turn left for the station.

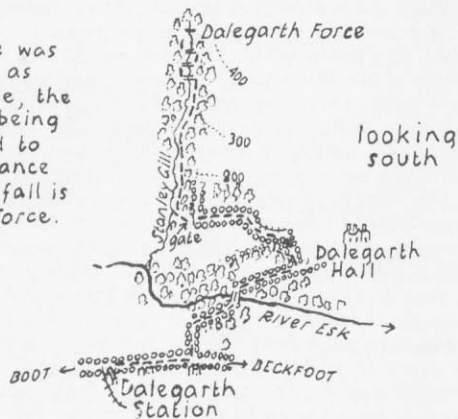
Harter Fell  
from Eel Tarn

## 7

## DALEGARTH FORCE

Start and finish at DALEGARTH STATION  
2 miles there and back. Allow 1½ hours.

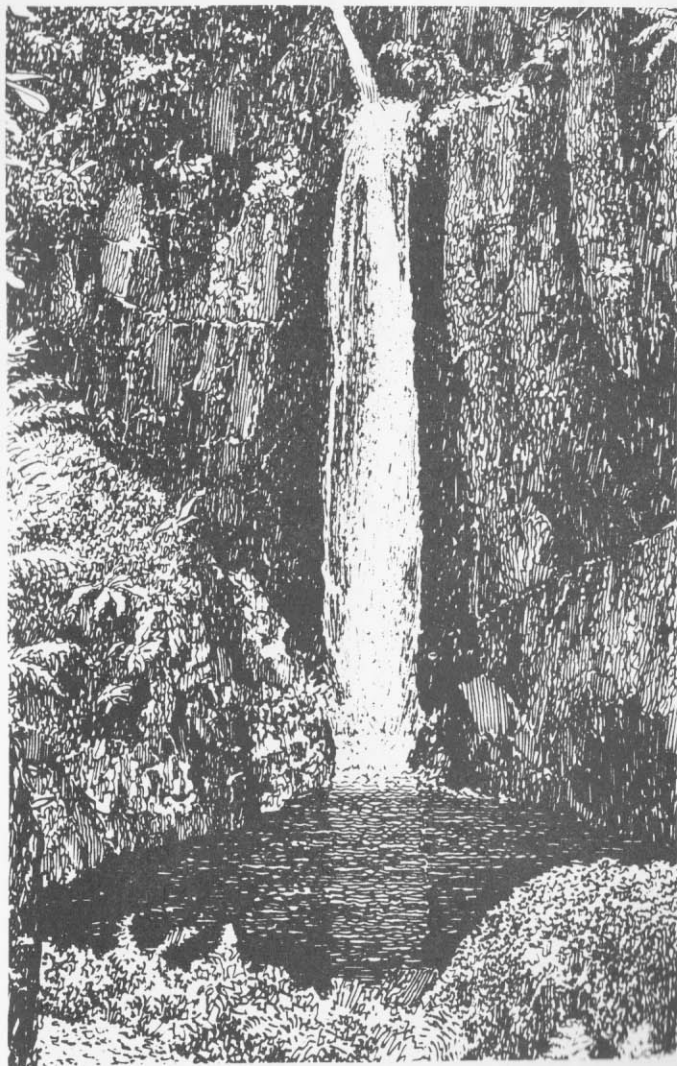
Dalegarth Force was formerly known as Stanley Gill Force, the Norse word *gill* being later romanticized to *ghyll*. On Ordnance maps, the waterfall is named *Stanley Force*.



This is deservedly the most popular walk from Dalegarth Station, the mile journey being charming and the final section, at Lakeland's loveliest waterfall, exquisitely so. You have heard of sylvan beauty: it is here, in Eskdale, at Dalegarth Force.

Walk along the road to the right from Dalegarth Station for 300 yards and then follow the signposted lane on the left, crossing the River Esk at a bridge to reach a junction of lanes with Dalegarth Hall in view ahead. Go left at the junction and keep to the lane (ignoring bridleway signs en route) until a gate on the left gives access to Stanley Ghyll Wood. From the gate a rough path leads to a stream and continues alongside up a wooded ravine. Further, three wooden bridges cross the stream in succession as the ravine narrows; from the third there is a glimpse of Dalegarth Force ahead, an uninterrupted view of it being obtained after a scramble up the left side from the bridge. KEEP SMALL CHILDREN ON A TIGHT LEASH HEREBABOUTS.

Return to Dalegarth Station by the same route.



Dalegarth Force

## A RIVERSIDE WALK

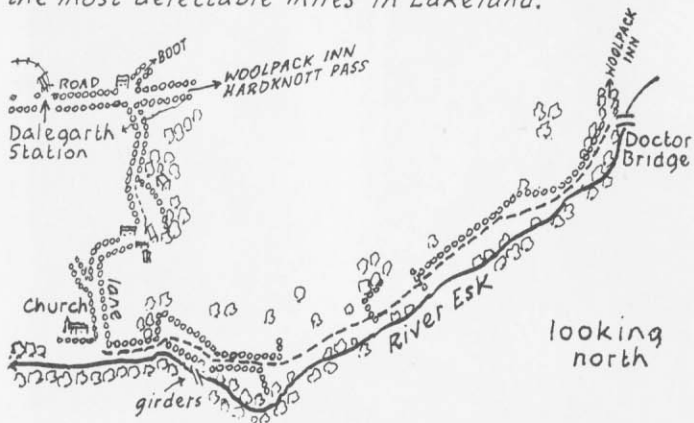
Start and finish at DALEGARTh STATION

A short ramble of sustained charm.

2¼ miles. Allow 1½ hours.

Turn left along the road from Dalegarth Station and at the crossroads go along the walled lane to the right, which leads to St. Catherine's Church, occupying an isolated site on the north bank of the River Esk.

From here, a signpost "To Doctor Bridge" indicates a footpath, which, with the river on the right all the way, threads a delightful passage in gorse and bracken, with a lovely view ahead, to Doctor Bridge. Return the same way. It is not hardship but a renewal of pleasure to retrace steps over one of the most delectable miles in Lakeland.

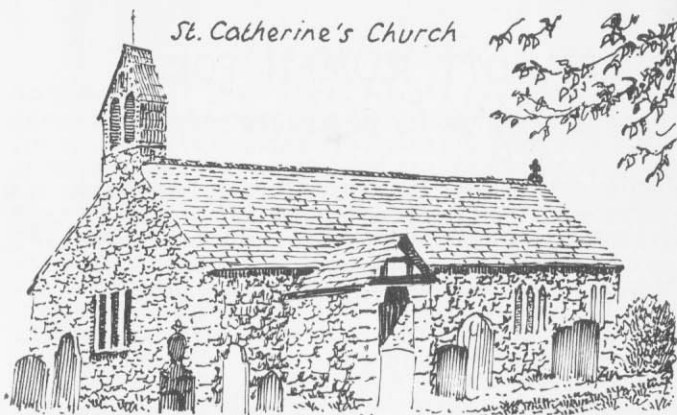


After admiring the simple beauty of the church, note the striking memorial to Tommy Dobson in the graveyard.

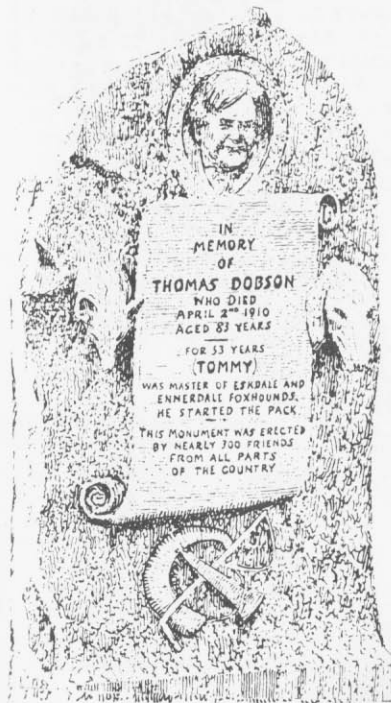
Also of interest are two girders spanning the river in a rocky gorge. These are relics of a branch of the mineral railway from Dalegarth to mines on the south bank of the Esk and formerly supported a bridge to carry the line over the river.

As Doctor Bridge is approached, the splendid cataract of Birker Force is seen spilling over a cliff high on the right.

St. Catherine's Church



St. Catherine's, a plain structure, built of the local granite during the 17th century, is the parish church of Eskdale.



Tommy Dobson's name has not lived on as has John Peel's.

Yet his reputation locally as a Master of Foxhounds was even greater. Foxhunting was his whole life and appropriately his inscribed gravestone reflects his passion.



## HARDKNOTT ROMAN FORT

Start and finish at DALEGARTH STATION

Some road walking, and some valley rambling. An interesting objective.

7 miles there and back.  
Allow 3½ hours.

This visit can be done by road throughout, turning left from Dalegarth Station and keeping to the farmac for 3½ miles. It may also be done (in longer time) by footpath throughout, taking the riverside walk to Doctor Bridge (Walk 8) and proceeding thence via Penny Hill. The diagram suggests a compromise, reaching Doctor Bridge by road and taking the farm access and footpath from there to rejoin the road at the foot of Hardknott Pass, where a steep climb of half a mile reveals the fort on the left.

Boat  
Church  
Dalegarth Station



The path onwards from Penny Hill is delightful but not quite easy. There are gates, stiles, fords and finally stepping stones to be negotiated. The path is indistinct at the crossing of Spothow Gill — look for a signpost and stile.

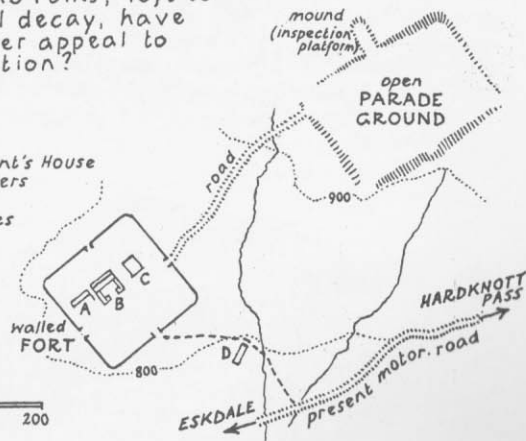
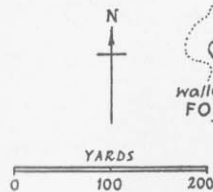
looking northeast

## The Roman Fort

Hard Knott is the rugged height overlooking and dominating the pass to which it has given its name. Its southwestern slopes fall steeply from the cliffs of Border End to an inclined grassy shelf extending for half a mile before breaking abruptly in a line of crags above the valley of the Esk. This shelf, a strategic place of vantage commanding a view of Eskdale from the mountains down to the sea, was selected by the Romans towards the end of the first century A.D. as a site for establishing a garrison to reinforce their military occupation of the district. Here they built *MEDIODIVM*, a fort today more usually and certainly more easily referred to as **HARDKNOTT CASTLE**. Although now ruinous, the main structure and outbuildings have survived the passing of time sufficiently to yield a valuable source of information and study for the expert and an object of considerable interest to the non-expert.

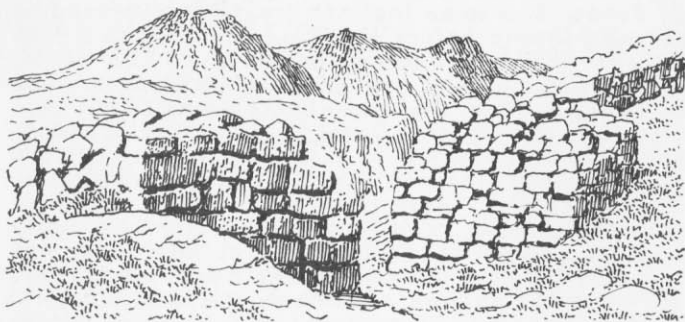
In recent years the walls of the fort have been rebuilt by the Ministry of Works, a slate course indicating the original wall below and the restored portion above. There is divided opinion as to whether this physical reconstruction is desirable. Would not the ruins, left to their natural decay, have had a greater appeal to the imagination?

- A: Commandant's House
- B: Headquarters
- C: Granaries
- D: Bath-houses

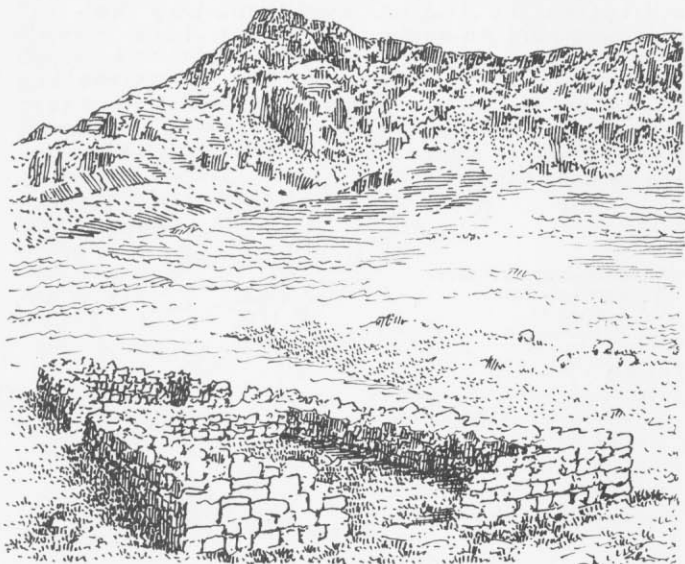


## The Roman Fort

The north gate, looking to the Scafells



The bath house, looking to Border End



## HARTER FELL

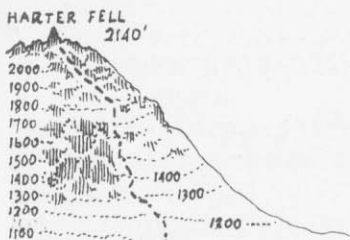
Start and finish at DALEGARTH STATION

A mountain climb, more ambitious than the other walks described in this booklet. Suitable for novices ONLY in fine settled weather; NOT in misty conditions. An excellent expedition, a great experience and a day to remember.

7½ miles there and back.  
Allow 5 hours.

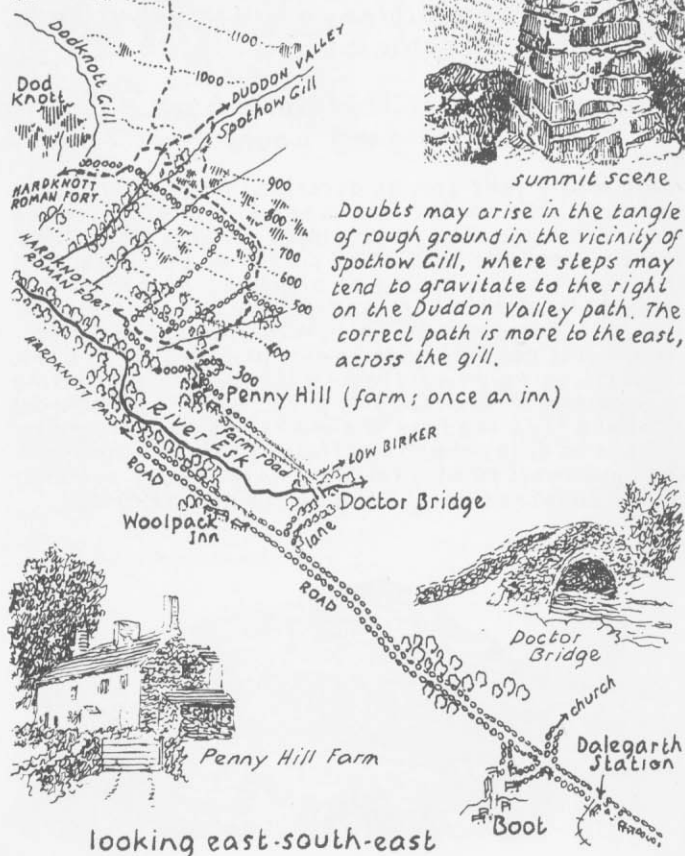
Not many fells can be described as *beautiful*, but the word fits Harter Fell, especially so when viewed from Eskdale. The lower slopes on this flank climb steeply from the tree-lined curves of the River Esk in a luxurious covering of bracken; higher up is a wide belt of heather, and finally grey turrets and ramparts of rock rise to a neat, shapely pyramid. The fell is not only good to look at but good to climb, interest being well sustained throughout and rising to a climax in the last few yards, where an upthrust of naked rock requires the walker to turn cragsman if he is to enjoy the magnificent panorama seen from the uppermost point. Here, on Harter Fell's summit, is the culmination of Eskdale's many delights.





summit scene

Doubts may arise in the tangle of rough ground in the vicinity of Spothow Gill, where steps may tend to gravitate to the right on the Duddon Valley path. The correct path is more to the east, across the gill.

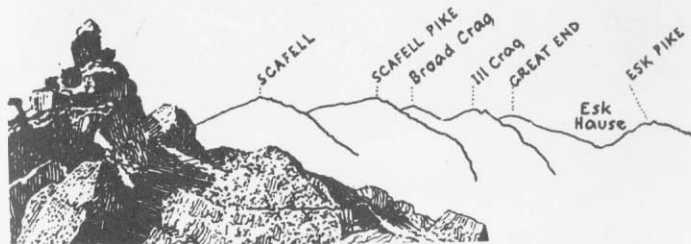


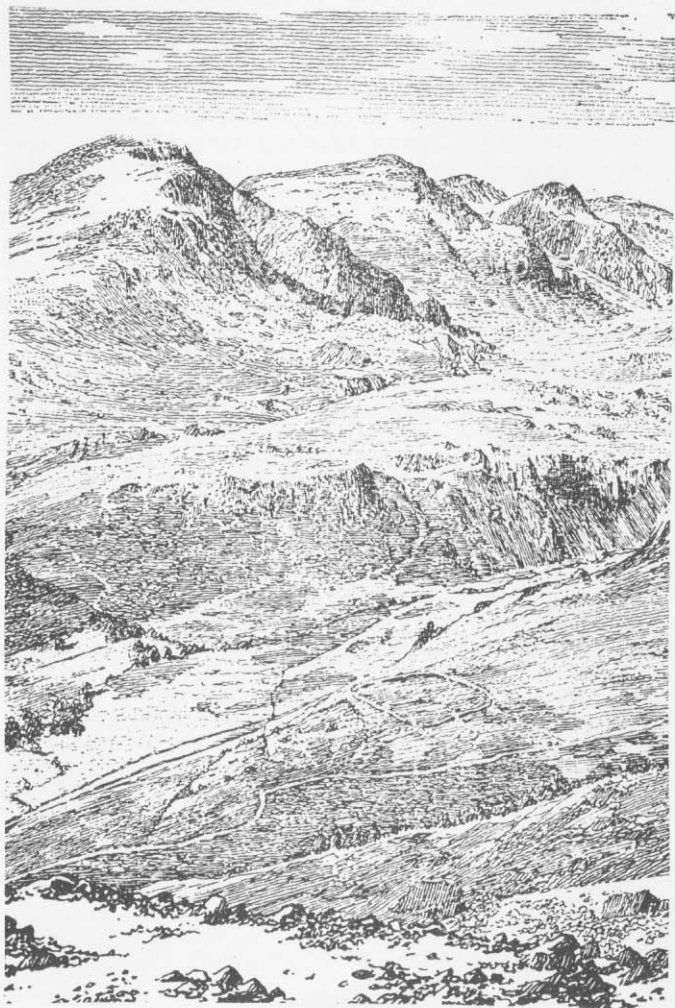
looking east-south-east

Turn left along the road from Dalegarth Station and keep to the tarmac for a mile, where (with the Woolpack Inn in sight 150 yards ahead) go along a lane on the right to Doctor Bridge, which cross and follow the farm access to Penny Hill. Just beyond the farm buildings take a path ascending to the right; this crosses enclosures and continues above a wall on the open fell. When it trends to the right keep on ahead by the wall to cross Spothow Gill, beyond which join a thin track heading directly up a slope of heather towards the now-obvious top of the fell. (Ignore a clearer path following the gill). The track ascends to a breach in the crags ahead and climbs a steep and stony rake, now quite distinctly, to an Ordnance column and a cairn occupying a craggy rise and seeming to mark the summit of the fell. But rejoicings and celebrations are premature, for this is not the highest point. Nearby eastwards is a steep-sided outcrop of rock rising several feet nearer to heaven, and beyond that is another of slightly lower elevation. The middle one of these three rock tors is therefore the true summit. It appears to be unassailable, but an exploration discloses a weakness on its east side by which its crest may be attained by a simple scramble. The third turret also offers an easy access to its top, on the south side. Having accomplished the trinity, celebrations can commence.

The view is magnificent in all directions. In particular the prospect of the Scafell range at the head of Eskdale is a picture of grandeur that no camera can resist.

With an eye on the time, tear yourself from the impressive surroundings and return by the same route. Two hours should suffice for the journey back and a drink before the last train departs.





*The head of Eskdale, from Harter Fell*