

---

WALKING THE LAKE DISTRICT FELS

# WASDALE

THE SCAFELLS, GREAT GABLE, PILLAR

---

MARK RICHARDS

CICERONE

© Mark Richards 2019  
Second edition 2019  
ISBN: 978 1 78631 031 6

Originally published as Lakeland Fellranger, 2011  
ISBN: 978 1 85284 544 5

Printed in China on behalf of Latitude Press Ltd  
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.  
All photographs are by the author unless otherwise stated.  
All artwork is by the author.



Maps are reproduced with permission from HARVEY Maps,  
[www.harveymaps.co.uk](http://www.harveymaps.co.uk)

### Updates to this Guide

While every effort is made by our authors to ensure the accuracy of guidebooks as they go to print, changes can occur during the lifetime of an edition. Any updates that we know of for this guide will be on the Cicerone website ([www.cicerone.co.uk/1031/updates](http://www.cicerone.co.uk/1031/updates)), so please check before planning your trip. We also advise that you check information about such things as transport, accommodation and shops locally. Even rights of way can be altered over time. We are always grateful for information about any discrepancies between a guidebook and the facts on the ground, sent by email to [updates@cicerone.co.uk](mailto:updates@cicerone.co.uk) or by post to Cicerone, Juniper House, Murley Moss, Oxenholme Road, Kendal, LA9 7RL.

**Register your book:** To sign up to receive free updates, special offers and GPX files where available, register your book at [www.cicerone.co.uk](http://www.cicerone.co.uk).

Front cover: Great Gable from Haystacks

Title page: Pinnacles on Lingmell

## CONTENTS

Map keys . . . . .	5
Volumes in the series . . . . .	6
Author preface . . . . .	9
Starting points . . . . .	10
<b>INTRODUCTION</b> . . . . .	13
Valley bases . . . . .	13
Fix the Fells . . . . .	15
Using this guide . . . . .	15
Safety and access . . . . .	18
Additional online resources . . . . .	19
<b>FELLS</b> . . . . .	20
1 Buckbarrow . . . . .	20
2 Caw Fell . . . . .	26
3 Crag Fell . . . . .	36
4 Eskdale Moor . . . . .	44
5 Great End . . . . .	51
6 Great Gable . . . . .	58
7 Great How . . . . .	72
8 Grike . . . . .	78
9 Haycock . . . . .	83
10 Illgill Head . . . . .	91
11 Iron Crag . . . . .	98
12 Kirk Fell . . . . .	106
13 Lank Rigg . . . . .	113
14 Lingmell . . . . .	119
15 Middle Fell . . . . .	126
16 Pillar . . . . .	131
17 Red Pike . . . . .	144
18 Scafell . . . . .	153
19 Scafell Pike . . . . .	164
20 Scoat Fell . . . . .	180
21 Seatallan . . . . .	190

22	Slight Side	197
23	Steeple	205
24	Whin Rigg	210
25	Yewbarrow	218

**RIDGE ROUTES** ..... 225

1	The Roof of England	225
2	The Mosedale Round	229
3	The Nether Beck Horseshoe	233
4	The Upper Ennerdale Round	237

**More to explore** ..... 241

**Useful contacts** ..... 242

**A fellranger's glossary** ..... 244

**The Lake District fells** ..... 248



Great Gable from Kirk Fell

## Key to route maps and topos



Route on a defined path

**12** Starting point



Route on an intermittent or undefined path

**4** Route number (on topos)



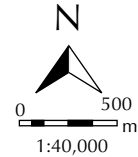
Fell summit featured in this guide (on maps)



Fell summit featured in this guide (on maps)



Route number (on maps)



## Harvey map legend



Lake, small tarn, pond



River, footbridge



Wide stream



Narrow stream



Peat hags



Marshy ground

Contours change from brown to grey where the ground is predominantly rocky outcrops, small crags and other bare rock.



Improved pasture



Rough pasture



Fell or moorland



Open forest or woodland



Dense forest or woodland



Felled or new plantation



Forest ride or firebreak



Settlement



Boundary, maintained  
Boundary, remains

On moorland, walls, ruined walls and fences are shown. For farmland, only the outer boundary wall or fence is shown.



Contour (15m interval)

Index contour (75m interval)

Auxiliary contour

Scree, spoil heap

Boulder field

Scattered rock and boulders

Predominantly rocky ground

Major crag, large boulder

O.S. trig pillar, large cairn

Spot height (from air survey)



Dual carriageway



Main road (fenced)



Minor road (unfenced)



Track or forest road



Footpath or old track



Intermittent path



Long distance path

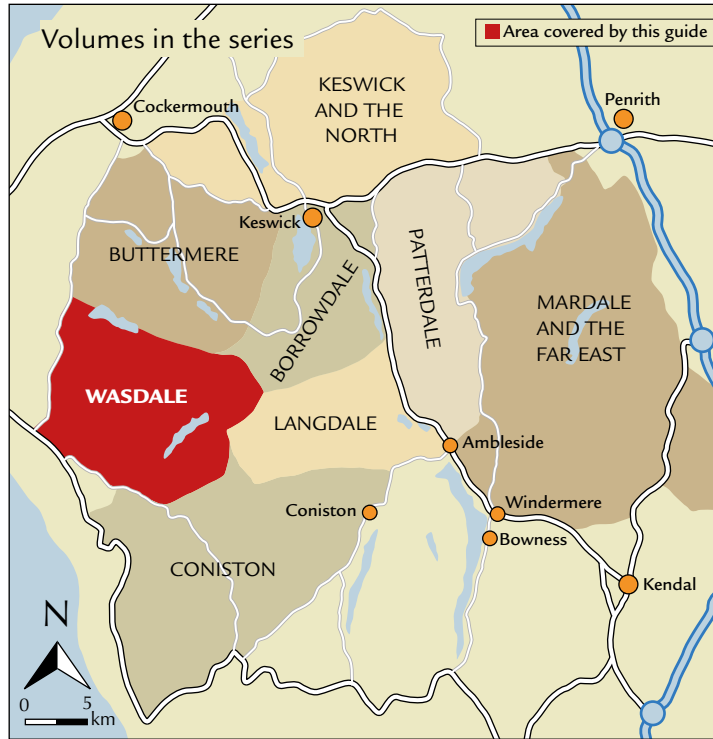


Powerline, pipeline



Building, ruin or sheepfold, shaft

The representation of a road, track or footpath is no evidence of the existence of a right of way.



Stone circle on Eskdale Moor (photo: Andrew Leaney)



Styhead Tarn from Windy Gap

## AUTHOR PREFACE

This land of living dreams we call the Lake District is a cherished blessing to know, love and share. As we go about our daily routines, we may take a fleeting moment to reflect that someone, somewhere, will be tramping up a lonely gill or along an airy ridge, peering from a lofty summit or gazing across a wind-blown tarn and taking lingering solace from its timeless beauty. The trappings of modern life thrust carpet and concrete under our feet, and it is always wonderful to walk the region's sheep trods and rough trails, and to imprint our soles upon the fells. This series sets out to give you the impetus and inspiration to make space in your schedule to explore them time and again, in myriad different ways.

However, the regular paths of long tradition deserve our care. Progressively many of the main paths are being re-set with cobbles and pitching by organisations such as Fix the Fells, to whose work you have contributed by buying this guide. But in many instances, the best consideration we can give these pathways is rest. The modern fellwanderer should show a new 'green' awareness by choosing to tread lightly on the land and to find new ways around the hills. One of the underlying impulses of this guide is to protect these beloved fells by presenting a diversity of route options for each and every fell – and also, in this new edition, recommending 'fell-friendly' routes less susceptible to erosion to as many summits as possible.

Another feature of this latest incarnation of Fellranger, apart from the smaller size to slip in your pocket or pack, is the addition of a selection of inspiring ridge routes at the end of each volume for those of you who like to spend a little longer with your head and feet in the heavenly realms, relishing the summit views and the connections between the felltops, as well as some accompanying online resources for readers with a digital bent.

*Mark Richards*

# STARTING POINTS

Location			GR NY...	Access	Ascents described from here
1	Wasdale Head Village Green	lots of rough parking (but fills up in season)	186 085	FP	Great End, Great Gable, Kirk Fell, Lingmell, Pillar, Red Pike, Scafell Pike, Scoat Fell, Yewbarrow
2	Wasdale Head	NT car park	183 075	NT	Great How, Illgill Head, Lingmell, Scafell, Scafell Pike
3	Overbeck Bridge	small car park on N of road	168 068	FP	Red Pike, Yewbarrow
4	Netherbeck Bridge	small off-road parking area on N of road	162 065	FP	Haycock, Red Pike, Scoat Fell, Seatallan
5	Goat Gill	small off-road parking areas on both sides	157 061	FP	Middle Fell
6	Greendale	large off-road parking area on E edge of village	144 056	FP	Buckbarrow, Middle Fell, Seatallan
7	Nether Wasdale (Forest Bridge)	small car park at Cinderdale Bridge	128 038	FP	Whin Rigg
8	Nether Wasdale	kerbside parking in the village	125 041	FP	Buckbarrow
9	Harrow Head	small off-road parking area on N of road	127 055	FP	Buckbarrow, Haycock, Seatallan
10	Blengdale Forest	roadside parking just S of the forest entrance	085 053	FP	Caw Fell
11	Coldfell Gate	small off-road parking area on E of road	055 101	FP	Caw Fell, Iron Crag, Lank Rigg
12	Blakeley	handful of rough roadside spaces	067 130	FP	Lank Rigg
13	Scaly Moss	small off-road parking area on W of road	061 137	FP	Crag Fell, Grike, Iron Crag
14	Scarny Brow	small off-road parking area on E of road	062 144	FP	Crag Fell, Grike, Iron Crag
15	Bleach Green	large car park	085 154	FP	Caw Fell, Crag Fell, Grike, Iron Crag
16	Bowness Knott	large car park	109 154	FP	Caw Fell, Haycock, Iron Crag, Pillar, Scoat Fell, Steeple

Location			GR NY...	Access	Ascents described from here
17	Black Sail Hut	walk/bike-in youth hostel at the head of Ennerdale	195 124	F	Great Gable, Kirk Fell, Pillar
18	Gatesgarth	bus stop, small private car park	195 150	PP, B	Great Gable, Pillar
19	Honister Pass	bus stop and large car park just E of the Slate Mine	225 135	NT, B	Great Gable
20	Seathwaite	large layby, before Seathwaite Farm, head of Borrowdale	235 123	FP	Great End, Great Gable, Scafell Pike
21	Old Dungeon Ghyll	NT car park, head of Great Langdale	286 061	NT, B	Scafell Pike
22	Brotherilkeld	layby at the foot of Hardknott Pass	210 012	FP	Scafell, Scafell Pike
23	Wha House	small car park N of Wha House Farm	200 009	FP	Scafell, Scafell Pike, Slight Side
24	Woolpack Inn	large car park on road side of pub	190 010	FP	Great How, Slight Side
25	Dalegarth Station	large station car park	173 007	FP	Eskdale Moor, Great How, Illgill Head, Scafell, Slight Side
26	Eskdale Green	marked roadside parking spaces by Giggle Alley wood	142 002	FP	Eskdale Moor, Whin Rigg
27	Miterdale Forest	small off-road parking area, E of Santon Bridge	146 012	FP	Eskdale Moor, Illgill Head
28	Santon Bridge	small tarmac car park on N of road	122 013	FP	Whin Rigg

FP – free parking

PP – pay parking

NT – National Trust (free to members)

B – on a bus route (in season)

F – only accessible by foot or bike



*The Scafells from Bowfell*



## INTRODUCTION

### Valley bases

The three valleys that are the focus of this guidebook – Ennerdale, Wasdale and Eskdale – all run roughly west from the Lake District watershed towards the west coast of Cumbria. The most northerly, Ennerdale, points towards the faded Georgian town of Whitehaven, Wasdale towards the seaside village of Seascale just south of Sellafield nuclear power station and Eskdale to the Roman fort at Ravenglass. All are surrounded by fine mountain scenery, naturally, but otherwise they could not be more different.

Ennerdale is a long deep valley decked with conifers. There is no vehicular access above Ennerdale Water. Ascents this way are therefore challenging, demanding careful planning of your time. The mountains of Wasdale are emblematic of the rugged drama of the National Park and the valley's narrow access roads are all too quickly congested. Eskdale is an enchantingly green crag-rimmed valley whose minor road threads through and over the fells by Ulpha and the daunting Hardknott Pass into the Duddon. From this valley the Scafells are ever more enigmatically seen and remotely climbed.

### Facilities

The majority of walkers visiting these fine valleys base themselves as close to the walks as they can – and, as long as you have a car, there are plenty of

accessible hotels, B&Bs or self-catering cottages, as well as hostels and camp sites, scattered around. (The Visit Cumbria website ([www.visitcumbria.com](http://www.visitcumbria.com), click Accommodation) seems to have the best database or you could just use a search engine.)

'Wild' Ennerdale naturally has very little in the valley itself. Unless you want hostel accommodation, including the famous pedestrian access-only Black Sail Hut youth hostel, Ennerdale Bridge and Lamplugh are the places to look. Gosforth is a busy little holiday village not far from Wasdale and there are also several options at Nether Wasdale and Santon Bridge. The Wasdale Head Inn is the iconic pub that offers (B&B and self-catering) accommodation right under Yewbarrow, at the head of the valley, next to one of the camp sites. Eskdale, by contrast, having no lake to get in the way and a road running right through it, boasts accommodation the length of the valley from The Woolpack at the foot of Hardknott Pass to facilities at Eskdale Green – and no fewer than four pubs at the time of writing!

### Getting around

Buses are as rare as chicken's teeth in this area and those that do exist are of no use for fell ascents. The Cumbrian Coast Line, when combined with La'al Ratty (a seasonal narrow-gauge line from Ravenglass to Dalegarth), gives a useful means in the summer season to steam up Eskdale. A reminder about Ennerdale – if you plan to stay at Black Sail Hut you can use the Honister Rambler bus from Keswick alighting at Gatesgarth Farm at the foot of Buttermere and skip over Scarth Gap. Also, the Borrowdale Rambler 79 bus service turns at Seatoller (giving access to Seatoller) and is useful for long Scafell Pike ascents, via Sty Head and Esk Hause.



*A fork of popular paths on Scafell Pike*

Parking is not to be taken for granted anywhere in the National Park. Always allow time to find an alternative parking place, if not to switch to a different plan for your day or just set out directly from your door – perfectly possible if you find accommodation within any of the three valleys. Also take care

always to park safely and only in laybys and car parks, not on the side of the narrow country roads. Depending on where you are basing yourself, consider joining the National Trust ([www.nationaltrust.org.uk](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk)) in order to use their several car parks for free. Consult the Starting Points table to find out where they, and other parking places, are.

### Fix the Fells

The Fellranger series has always highlighted the hugely important work of the Fix the Fells project in repairing the most seriously damaged fell paths. The mighty challenge has been a great learning curve and the more recent work, including complex guttering, is quite superb. It ensures a flat foot-fall where possible, easy to use in ascent and descent, and excess water escapes efficiently minimising future damage.



The original National Trust and National Park Authority partnership came into being in 2001 and expanded with the arrival of Natural England, with additional financial support from the Friends of the Lake District and now the Lake District Foundation ([www.lakedistrictfoundation.org](http://www.lakedistrictfoundation.org)). But, and it's a big but, the whole endeavour needs to raise £500,000 a year to function. This enormous figure is necessary to keep pace with the challenges caused by the joint tyranny of boots and brutal weather. The dedicated and highly skilled team, including volunteers, deserve our sincerest gratitude for making our hill paths secure and sympathetic to their setting. It is a task without end, including pre-emptive repair to stop paths from washing out in the first place.

Mindful that a metre of path costs upwards of £200 there is every good reason to cultivate the involvement of fellwalkers in a cause that must be dear to our hearts... indeed our soles! Please make a beeline for [www.fixthefells.co.uk](http://www.fixthefells.co.uk) to make a donation, however modest. Your commitment will, to quote John Muir, 'make the mountains glad'.

### Using this guide

Unlike other guidebooks which show a single or limited number of routes up the Lakeland fells, the purpose of the Fellranger series has always been to offer the independent fellwalker the full range of approaches and paths available and invite them to combine them to create their own unique experiences. A valuable by-product of this approach has been to spread effects of walkers' footfall more evenly over the path network.





## 1 BUCKBARROW 430M/1411FT

<b>Climb it from</b>	Nether Wasdale <b>8</b> , Harrow Head <b>9</b> or Greendale <b>6</b>
<b>Character</b>	Striking craggy scarp forming the southern rim of Seatallan
<b>Fell-friendly route</b>	4
<b>Summit grid ref</b>	NY 136 061
<b>Link it with</b>	Seatallan

Visitors to Wasdale driving directly from Gosforth get their first impression of this amazing valley when they clap their eyes on the craggy facade of Buckbarrow, dead ahead, after crossing the cattle grid short of Harrow Head. The glacial forces that scoured the Wasdale Screes have replicated their effects here in microcosm.

Climbing this little hill can bring all the pleasure of scaling the mightiest of fells. You will love it most of all for the wide Wasdale valley view, the Screes and the Scafells – particularly stunning towards the latter part of the day when the sun's rays illuminate the facing fellsides in golden light. It is also the perfect partner to neighbouring Seatallan – no ascent of the latter is truly complete without visiting this little top.

The peak is commonly climbed from the open road running along its base either above Gill (4), Buckbarrow Farm (5) or the hamlet of Greendale (6). Yet

the connoisseur will derive much pleasure from starting and ending their walk at the tiny community of Nether Wasdale (also known as Strands), fashioning a circular walk that clambers over the fell-top via any of these popular start points. The lead-in and concluding pastures and woods (1, 2 or 3) make a lovely contrast, complementing the craggy scarp.



## Ascent from Nether Wasdale 8

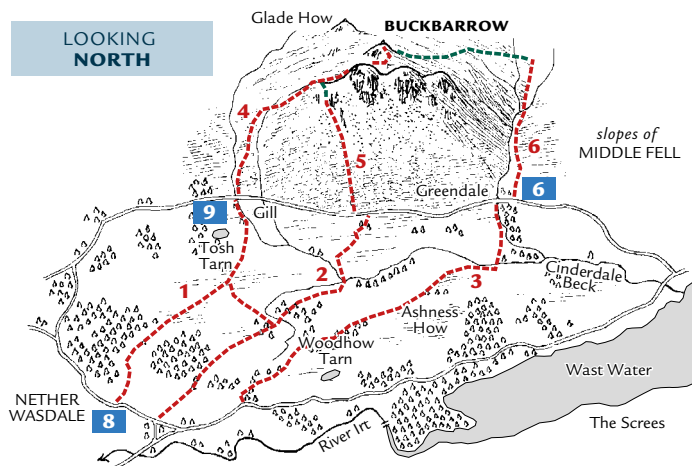
Three different routes lead across the fields from the Nether Wasdale area to the road underneath Buckbarrow from where the ascents proper begin. Route 1 is the most direct.

**Via Gill Farm** → 1.6km/1 mile ↑ 325m/1065ft ⊕ 35min

**1** Follow the footpath leading from the vicinity of the maypole, passing the tiny parish church of St Michael and All Angels and community hall, and leading through the yard of Kirkstile Farm en route to the holiday park camping field. The footpath is waymarked through fields to the lane leading past **Gill Farm**.

**Via Buckbarrow Farm** → 1.6km/1 mile ↑ 320m/1050ft ⊕ 25min

**2** Leave the road immediately beyond Cinderdale Bridge, following the lane to and through Mill Place and then the gated bridleway wending on towards Scale Bridge. At the wall-stile and gate just short of Scale Bridge, you can follow the bridleway to the left which links to the previous footpath (**1**) at the start of the walled lane to Gill. Alternatively, it is possible to cross the narrow meadow straight ahead via the gated Scale Bridge, heading on by green lanes and field-edges to **Buckbarrow Farm**, a retiring National Trust farmstead.



**Via Ashness How** → 2.4km/1½ miles ↑ 320m/1050ft ⊕ 35min

**3** Leave the minor road 0.4km (¼ mile) from the village, after the lane to Murt. A gated bridle-lane leads left, passes a derelict cottage and heads on as an open way by **Ashness How** and Roan Wood to arrive at the valley road by the bridge at **Greendale**.

## Ascent from Harrow Head 9

Two contrasting ways up to the summit from the road, the first on paths and the second steeply up loose scree for those with an excess of zeal!

**Via Gill Beck** → 1.6km/1 mile ↑ 325m/1065ft ⊕ 40min

**4** Leave the road above the lane from **Gill Farm**, with **Gill Beck** left and a wall right (with 'children playing' notice on wall), and soon meet the remnants of a small sheepfold. The stony path fends off the bracken beside the beck and then drifts easily right, gaining ground to ford a tiny gill, and follows the obvious rib onto the ridge. The path forks with the prospect of a great wall of rock ahead (do not try to clamber up this unless you are a competent climber). Keep left, easing round the left-hand end of the rock band. Notice the unusual three-compartment sheepfold in the hollow down to the left, with rounded walls and gather wings. The regular path to the summit heads on up to the notch, and passes a marsh before gaining the summit up to the left.



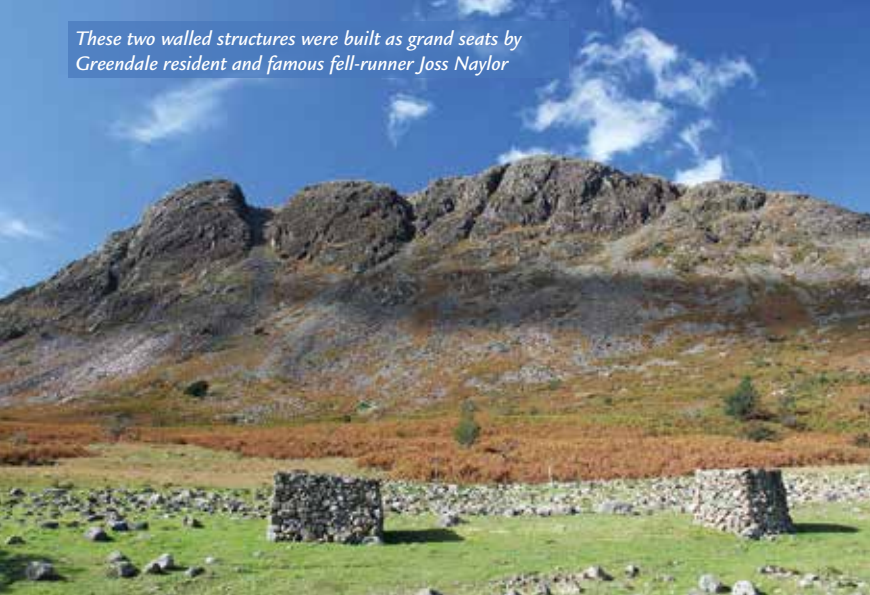
Summit cairn, looking to Whin Rigg

**Direct** → 1.2km/¾ mile ↑ 330m/1085ft ⊕ 45min

*Definitely not a route for descent*

**5** Some 30m E of the wall-end a path breaks off the open road into the bracken and goes straight up the slope, heading for the pale stripe of scree. Avoid actually treading in the very loose material, for all it is easier said than

*These two walled structures were built as grand seats by Greendale resident and famous fell-runner Joss Naylor*



done. A natural line can be followed to the head of the open gully, left of the cliff and a narrow gully, then go over the brow to join the regular path (4) from Gill.

## Ascent from Greendale 6

**Via Greendale Gill** → 2.8km/1¾ miles ↑ 355m/1165ft ⊕ 55min

*A longer, and partially pathless, approach.*

**6** Directly east of the hamlet of Greendale paths run N from the open road, cutting a swathe through the bracken and climbing into the **Greendale Gill** gorge. Brush past gorse and above a holly to reach an obvious ford. Head up the ridge (N), with a fine view of a narrow waterfall over to the left. After some 200m of ascent trend left, fording minor gills, and pass an old sheepfold. From this point take a gentle rising line SW, passing the slender cairn built in honour of Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother (1900-2002) by the Lakeland fell-running legend Joss Naylor, an inhabitant of Greendale. Keep the same line over the damp fellside to claim the high point of Buckbarrow.

## 1 BUCKBARROW

### The summit

The summit is a bold knuckle of rock set well back from the edge and surmounted by a small cairn. Most visitors will seek the greater scenic merits of the scarp edge, with the course of commonly trod paths marked on the map. The cairned prow above **Bull Crag** is a notable spot to venture to. Pecked into the rock on its southern face is a white dated and initialled memorial.

### Safe descents

Avoid the southern edge and stick to the tried and tested path trending SW down by Gill Beck (4), avoiding all obstacles, or head NE across damp slopes (6), passing the tall cairn and contouring via tiny gill fords to swing S down a ridge into the Greendale Gill valley.

### Ridge route

**Seatallan** → 3.2km/2miles ↓ 25m/80ft ↑ 280m/920ft ⊕ 1hr 15min

A continuing path leads NW via the little cairned knoll of Glade How. The path winds over the odd damp patch and rises to the skyline to a further distinctive cairn at Cat Biolds. From here turn NE and pass unhindered along the grassy ridge-top direct to the summit.

*Buckbarrow from Woodhow*

