

WALKING THE LAKE DISTRICT FELS

# KESWICK AND THE NORTH

SKIDDAW AND BLENCATHRA

MARK RICHARDS

CICERONE

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*Front cover:*  
*Title page:* Ullock Pike reflected in Bassenthwaite on a hazy summer day

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## A fellranger's glossary

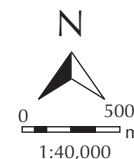
## Alphabetical list of fells in the Fellranger series

Lonscale Fell from Sinen Gill







































## Key to route maps and topos

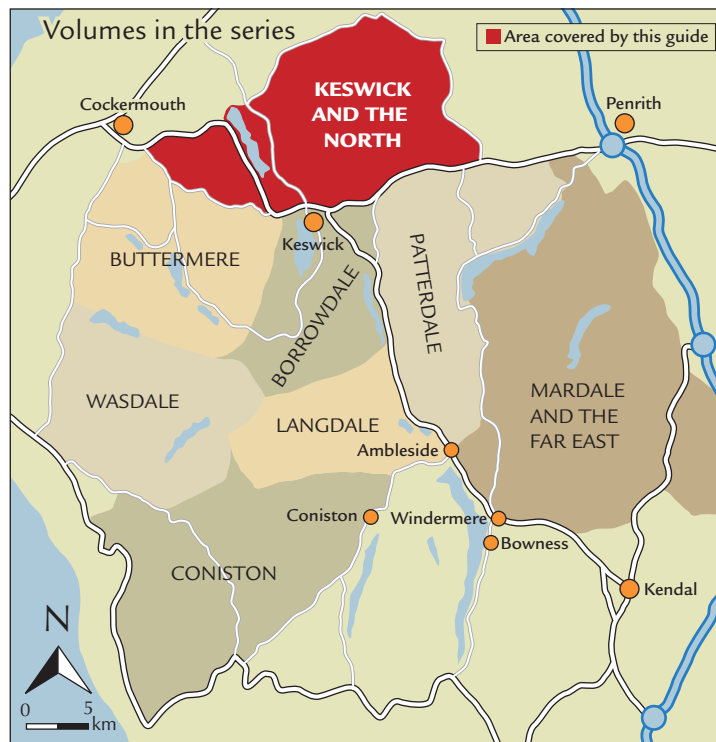
-  **Route on a defined path**
-  **Route on an intermittent or undefined path**
-  **Fell summit featured in this guide (on maps)**
-  **Fell summit featured in this guide (on maps)**
-  **Route number (on maps)**
-  **Starting point**
-  **Route number (on topos)**



## 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
-  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
-  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)

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



## 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 to each summit which are less susceptible to erosion.

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... unless otherwise indicated)	Access	Ascents described from here
1	Mouthwaite Comb	Verge parking for 6 cars	349 273	FP	Bannerdale Crag, Blencathra, Souther Fell
2	Scales	Large parking area close to pub and layby	339 267	FP	Blencathra
3	Threlkeld	Village car park up Blease Road	318 256	PP, B	Blencathra
4	Blencathra Centre	Open parking beyond cattle grid	302 256	FP	Blencathra, Lonscale Fell
5	Gale Road	Verge for 20 cars at top of lane, usually crammed	281 253	FP	Latrigg, Lonscale Fell, Skiddaw, Skiddaw Little Man
6	Millbeck	Parking for 5 cars at village hall	256 261	PP	Carl Side, Dodd, Skiddaw, Skiddaw Little Man
7	Whinlatter Pass	Large formal car park	207 244	PP, B	Lord's Seat, Whinlatter
8	Hobcarton	Large forestry parking area	192 245	FP, B	Whinlatter
9	Spout Force	Large forestry parking area	182 255	FP, B	Broom Fell, Graystones, Lord's Seat, Whinlatter
10	Harrot Hill Farm	Tiny verge NW of farm by gill in wood	151 282	FP	Graystones
11	Embleton Church	Verge for 10 cars	163 294	FP	Graystones, Ling Fell
12	Brumston Bridge	Verge for 15 cars between bridge and gate	186 293	FP	Broom Fell, Graystones, Ling Fell, Sale Fell
13	Wythop Church	Verge by church and lower down with scope for 15 cars	189 301	FP	Sale Fell
14	Pheasant Hotel	Generous parking on old road	199 307	FP	Sale Fell
15	Woodend Brow	Compact parking area (donation)	218 276	FP, B	Barf, Lord's Seat, Sale Fell

Location			GR (NY... unless otherwise indicated)	Access	Ascents described from here
16	Powter How	Compact parking area (donation)	221 265	FP, B	Barf, Lord's Seat
17	Old Sawmill Tearoom	Large formal parking area	235 282	PP, B	Carl Side, Dodd, Long Side, Ullock Pike
18	Rabbit Warren	Compact forestry recess with room for 15 cars	234 292	FP	Skiddaw, Ullock Pike
19	High Side	Tiny recessed verge for 5 cars	236 310	FP	Carl Side, Skiddaw, Ullock Pike
20	Peter House	Two laybys for 12 cars (donations to Fix the Fells)	249 323	FP	Bakestall, Great Calva, Skiddaw
21	Skiddaw House		287 291	F	Bakestall, Blencathra, Great Calva, Lonscale Fell, Skiddaw, Skiddaw Little Man
22	Horsemoor Hills	Tiny verge for 3 cars	252 334	ask at farm	Great Calva, Great Cockup, Knott, Meal Fell
23	Binsey Lodge	Verge space for 10 cars	235 351	FP	Binsey
24	Keswick Reach	Lots of space on old road parallel to A591 (not at the lodge retreat itself)	207 354	FP, B	Binsey
25	Over Water	Small car park for 10 cars	255 354	FP	Binsey
26	Longlands	Small verge for 6 cars	266 358	FP	Brae Fell, Great Cockup, Great Sca Fell, Knott, Longlands Fell, Meal Fell
27	Greenhead	Lane above farm; room for 10 cars	286 370	FP	Brae Fell, Great Sca Fell, Longlands Fell
28	Fell Side	Open common verge	304 373	FP	Brae Fell, Great Sca Fell, High Pike, Knott

## STARTING POINTS

Location			GR (NY... unless otherwise indicated)	Access	Ascents described from here
29	Nether Row	Small grassy triangle	324 377	FP	High Pike
30	Hesket Newmarket	Generous village car park	342 386	FP, B	High Pike
31	Carrock Beck	Verge on common	350 350	FP	Carrock Fell, High Pike
32	Stone Ends	Verge on common	354 336	FP	Carrock Fell
33	Mosedale	Quaker Meeting House car park (donation) and verge	357 322	FP	Bowscale Fell, Carrock Fell
34	Grainsgill Bridge	Verge near road-end	327 327	FP	Bowscale Fell, Carrock Fell, Great Calva, High Pike, Knott
35	Bowscale	Small layby parking area for 10 cars	359 317	FP	Bowscale Fell
36	Mungrisdale	Generous parking area opposite village hall (donation)	364 302	FP, B	Bannerdale Crag, Blencathra, Bowscale Fell, Souther Fell

FP – free parking

PP – pay parking

B – on a bus route (in season)

F – only accessible by foot or bike

*A sneaky path bound for Widow Hause breaks off from  
a forest track, en route to Broom Fell or Graystones*







## INTRODUCTION

### Valley bases

In the main part, the great mountain massif that looms to the north of Keswick is a lonesome land of rounded common pasture ringing to a symphony of skylarks. No wonder the most northerly fells here, affectionately known collectively as Back o'Skidda, are adored by discerning fellwanderers for their liberty and seclusion. They are merely the backdrop to its two trophy mountains – Skiddaw and Blencathra. Across Bassenthwaite Lake a complementary cluster of smaller fells rises from the conifers of Whinlatter Forest Park, much less visited and offering fine viewpoints for the star attraction, with wide unimpeded views north across the Solway.

Sitting at the confluence of two wide valleys, that of Bassenthwaite Lake to the north and that of the River Greta to the east, Keswick is the ultimate valley base for exploring this rich landscape. The setting is both sublime and handy, giving the sweetest of fell-path approaches to the Skiddaw massif, with the Glenderaterra valley providing access to the quiet roadless country at the headwaters of the Caldew and, further east, onto Scales Fell for Blencathra.



The town also serves as a springboard for short drives or bus journeys via Braithwaite to access the cluster of gentle fells above Whinlatter Forest Park.

The A66 is the main thoroughfare through the Vale of Keswick from Penrith in the east to Cockermouth in the west, while country roads skirt all around the periphery of the Northern Fells to link Bassenthwaite, Ireby, Caldbeck, Hesketh Newmarket and Mungrisdale, offering tempting access into the interior from other angles. The Whinlatter Pass, sweeping serenely over from the picturesque Vale of Lorton to Braithwaite, forms the southern boundary of and offers additional access to the Whinlatter Group.

### Facilities

As long as you have a car, there are plenty of hotels, self-catering cottages and camp sites scattered across the area, including some established to serve the Cumbria Way which traverses the heart of the Northern Fells, although the main concentration is in Keswick and the nearby villages of Threlkeld, Portinscale and Braithwaite. (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.) Only in Keswick will you find a petrol station or a supermarket, but there are excellent village shops in Hesketh Newmarket, Portinscale, Braithwaite and Lorton.

### Getting around

For the carless the X4/X5 bus service is the key to access Keswick, running between Penrith and Cockermouth via Threlkeld and Keswick, or, from the south, the 555 runs from Lancaster via Kendal, Windermere and Ambleside. For getting around, the twice-daily 73 bus from Carlisle to Keswick via Caldbeck and Bassenthwaite may be of value at the start of a walk, but its timetable is geared more towards shoppers than trekkers. The Honister Rambler 77 bus is nifty for Whinlatter Pass approaches but only runs between spring and autumn.



Parking is not to be taken for granted anywhere in this popular park. The pinch point in this area is along the A66 from Scales round to Bassenthwaite. 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 main valleys. Always take care to park safely and only in laybys and car parks, not on the side of the narrow country roads. Consult the Starting points table to find out where the best parking places (and bus stops) are to be found. Note that although, in general, one preferred starting point is specified for each route, there may be alternative starting points nearby (for example in the vicinity of Whinlatter Visitor Centre) should you arrive and find your chosen spot taken.

### 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, is 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 needed 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.

Bearing in mind 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'.





## 1 BAKESTALL 673M/2208FT

Climb it from	Peter House 20 or Skiddaw House 21
Character	Craggy northern end of the Skiddaw massif forming a majestic amphitheatre above Dash Falls
Fell-friendly route	1
Summit grid ref	NY 266 307
Link it with	Skiddaw
Part of	The Skiddaw Skyline

This craggy shoulder is one of the treasures of the Skiddaw massif and fully deserves to be savoured for its own sturdy virtues. It's best appreciated from the north from Dash Beck valley, with the drama of Dead Crag rising above Dead Beck ravine and the spectacular Whitewater Dash waterfall (commonly known as Dash Falls). Under these eastern slopes runs the access track to Skiddaw House – a truly remote mountain hostel, off-grid and off the beaten track.

The great amphitheatre of Dead Crag offers a happy home for raven and peregrine above shy Dead Beck, made more reclusive by recent tight fencing to exclude the sheep and encourage natural regrowth of native trees. Within the ravine lurks scant evidence of a lead mine and some fine cascades in its lower stages, but they are currently inaccessible to the casual fellwanderer.

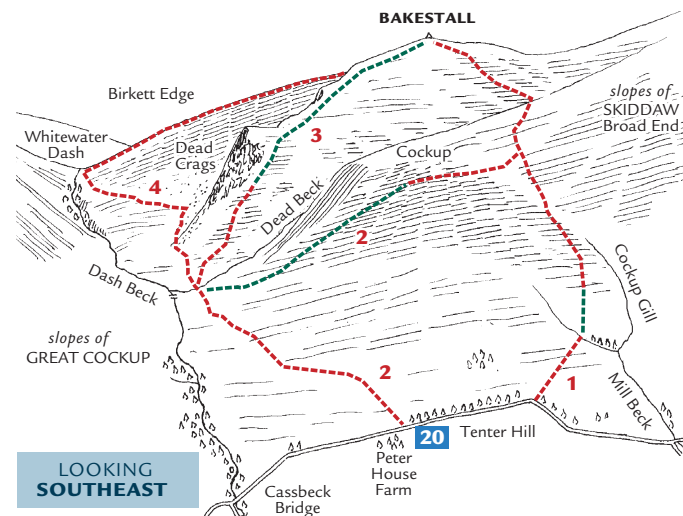
All too many walkers charge up Skiddaw by the fence and miss the aura and magic of Bakestall. Don't be in their number. Allow time for its exclusive pleasures, but wander carefully as the cliffs are real and profound. There are three lines of ascent, with variants, from the north, with only Birkett Edge (4) carrying a regular flow of foot traffic.

### Ascent from Peter House 20

Three contrasting routes on grassy highways, one with just a little off-piste action (2) and another offering a stiff direct ascent for the true adventurer (3)

**Via Cockup** → 3.1km/2 miles ↑ 475m/1558ft ☉ 1hr 45min

**1** Follow the road southwest, passing **Tenter Hill Farm**. At the right-hand bend short of **Melbecks** leave the road left, following the bridle-lane. After a gate this becomes an open green track. Continue through further gates, rising up the pasture with a wall/fence left to a hand-gate in the intake wall. Follow on up the fellslope to come over the shoulder of **Cockup**. A clear path retains the southeasterly line then curves south to ford **Dead Beck**. From here wind easily up the slope to the summit.



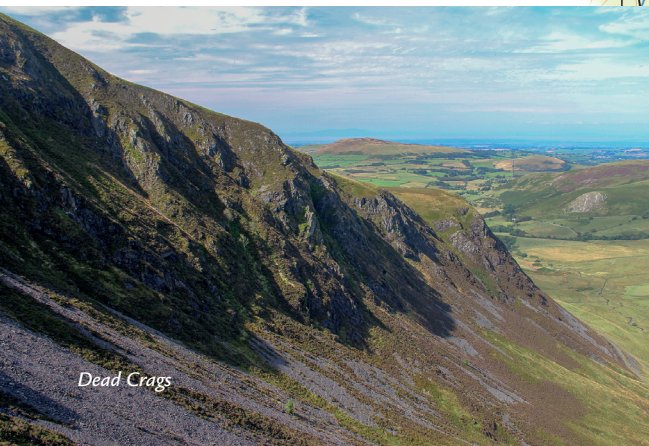
**Via the Dash valley road** → 3.5km/2¼ miles ↑455m/1496ft ⌚1hr 40min

**2** Follow the gated road (southeast) direct from the parking area. Step off the metalled road as a track forks right, following a marker stone, 'Bridleway via Dash Falls, Skiddaw House, Threlkeld'. After the next gate climb the pathless slope (right), mounting onto the western shoulder of **Cockup** and curving round high up to join an increasingly clear sheep path. Follow it on to bend left to join Route **1**.

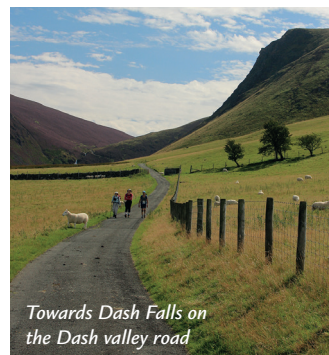
**Via Dead Crag** → 2.7km/1¾ miles ↑460m/1510ft ⌚1hr 40min

*A very vigorous, perhaps less-than-intuitive, direct option*

**3** Set off with Route **2** from Peter House Farm. Instead of turning right at the gate, take the path mounting the obvious groove directly up the fellside. At last the slope eases and the path is lost. Carefully follow sheep trods above the dramatic gulf of **Dead Crag**. Head south, initially carefully following sheep trods, while admiring the view over the dramatic gulf of Dead Crag, peering imperiously down



Dead Crag

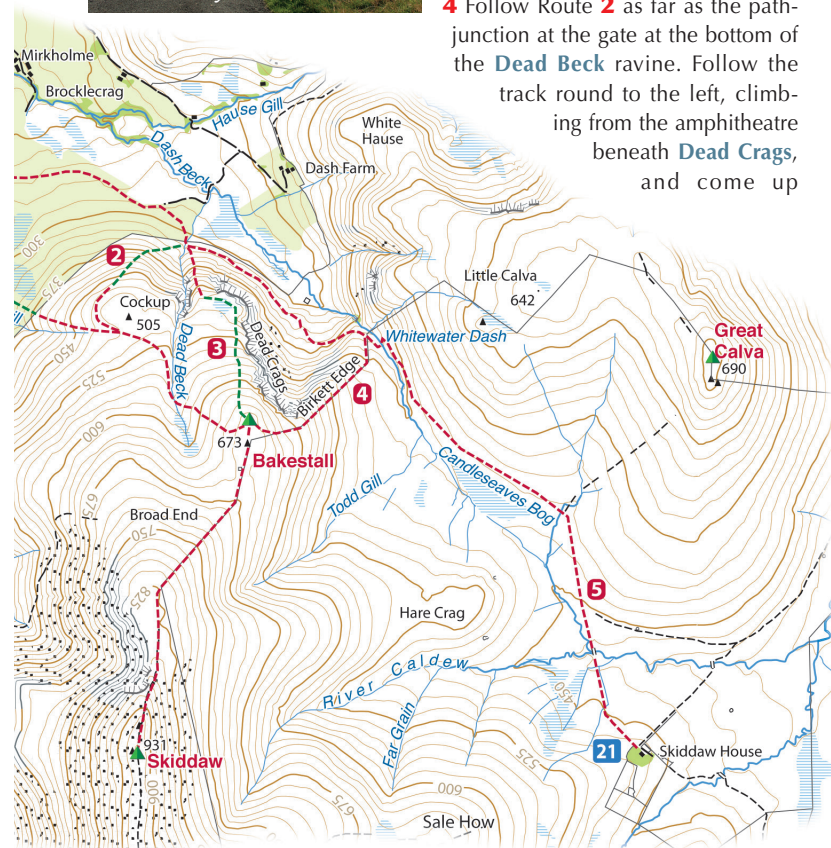


upon Whitewater Dash. The outcropping soon makes a clear path impossible but your route to the summit is unimpeded.

**Via Birkett Edge** → 3.7km/2¼ miles ↑455m/1490ft ⌚1hr 50min

*The conventional route via Whitewater Dash also involves a stiff climb.*

**4** Follow Route **2** as far as the path-junction at the gate at the bottom of the **Dead Beck** ravine. Follow the track round to the left, climbing from the amphitheatre beneath **Dead Crag**, and come up





beside the no less impressive dash of white water, which can be a thrilling sight. Just before the next gate leave the supply road to Skiddaw House hostel and step up right, ascending beside the wall, which quickly becomes a fence, and climbing **Birkett Edge**. After a period of diligent climbing watch for a fence-junction to the left. Soon the path splits and a stepped path bends half-right to reach the summit cairn. If you miss this in the mist, follow the main fence-side path which mounts to the cairn at the left-hand fence-corner. Here turn right, following the path down (yes, down) to the summit only 100 metres away.

---

### Ascent from Skiddaw House 21

**Via Birkett Edge** →3.8km/2½ miles ↑310m/1010ft ☉1hr 30min

*The integral opening move to the Skiddaw skyline*

**5** Follow the supply track northwest, crossing the footbridge over the **River Caldew** beside the ford and continuing to the gate beside the head of **Whitewater Dash**. Go through and, stepping up left, join forces with Route **4**.

---

### The summit

A substantial cairn forms an attractive foreground to a spacious northerly view far beyond Binsey to Criffel and the distant hills of Dumfries across the Solway. In the opposite direction see Skiddaw peeping to the left of Broad End, as well as Helvellyn and High Street and the northern aspect of Blencathra, with Atkinson Pike the more striking peak. Northwards Dash Farm lies over the lip of Dead Crag, backed by the Uldale Fells and Knott, with Carrock Fell peering over Little Calva.

---

### Safe descents

With the rim of Dead Crag lurking unseen to the NE you need to be alert in mist. The sure course is S to the fence and then down Birkett Edge (**4**) to the Skiddaw House track, turning left for the public road at Peter House or right for Skiddaw House (**5**).



Summit cairn looking north towards Knott

### Ridge route

**Skiddaw** →2km/1¼ miles ↓10m/33ft ↑270m/890ft ☉1hr 10min

Step back S to join the fence. The fence-side path soon embarks on a long steady climb onto Broad End, where the ridge path drifts naturally away from the fence (as it runs under the east slope of the mountain) to gain the north top.