

WALKING THE LAKE DISTRICT FELS

# BORROWDALE

SCAFELL PIKE, CATBELLS, GREAT GABLE  
AND THE DERWENTWATER FELS

MARK RICHARDS

CICERONE

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Second edition 2021  
ISBN: 978 1 78631 038 5

Originally published as *Lakeland Fellranger*, 2008  
ISBN: 978 1 85284 540 7



Printed in China on responsibly sourced paper  
on behalf of Latitude Press Ltd

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.  
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### 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/1038/updates](http://www.cicerone.co.uk/1038/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.

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*Front cover:* Gully view into the upper Newlands Beck valley from High Spy  
*Title page:* Skew Gill from the path south of Styhead Tarn

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## Key to route maps and topos

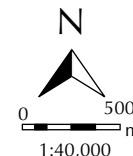
-  **Route on a defined path** **12** **Starting point**
-  **Route on an intermittent or undefined path** **4** **Route number (on topos)**

-  **Fell summit featured in this guide (on maps)**






































- Fell summit featured in this guide (on maps)**

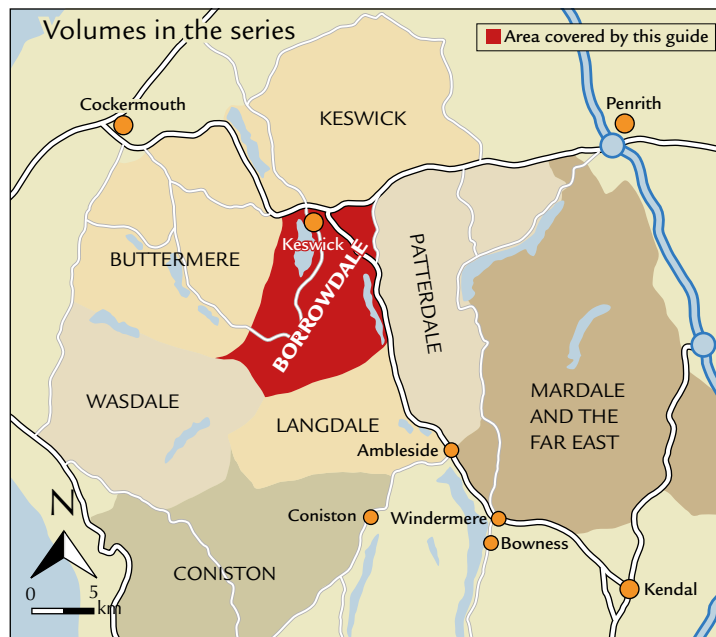
- 3** **Route number (on maps)**



## Harvey map legend

- |  |                          |   |                                    |
|--|--------------------------|---|------------------------------------|
|    | Lake, small tarn, pond   |    | Contour (15m interval)             |
|    | River, footbridge        |    | Index contour (75m interval)       |
|    | Wide stream              |    | Auxiliary contour                  |
|    | Narrow stream            |    | Scree, spoil heap                  |
|    | Peat hags                |    | Boulder field                      |
|    | Marshy ground            |    | Scattered rock and boulders        |
| <div>Contours change from brown to grey where the ground is predominantly rocky outcrops, small crags and other bare rock.</div> |                          |    | Predominantly rocky ground         |
|    | Improved pasture         |    | Major crag, large boulder          |
|    | Rough pasture            |    | O.S. trig pillar, large cairn      |
|    | Fell or moorland         |    | Spot height (from air survey)      |
|    | Open forest or woodland  |    | Dual carriageway                   |
|    | Dense forest or woodland |    | Main road (fenced)                 |
|    | Felled or new plantation |    | Minor road (unfenced)              |
|    | Forest ride or firebreak |   | Track or forest road               |
|    | Settlement               |  | Footpath or old track              |
|    | Boundary, maintained     |  | Intermittent path                  |
|    | Boundary, remains        |  | Long distance path                 |
| <div>On moorland, walls, ruined walls and fences are shown. For farmland, only the outer boundary wall or fence is shown.</div>  |                          |  | 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.



## AUTHOR PREFACE

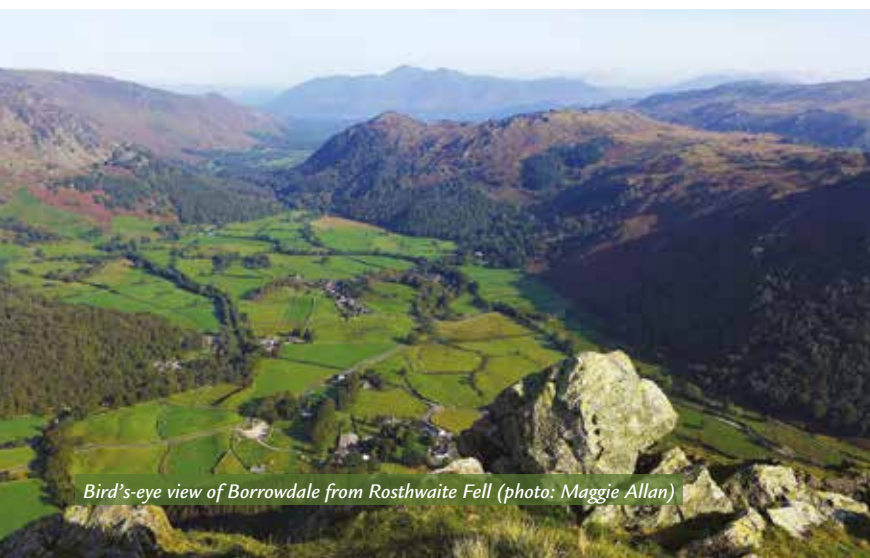
This land of living dreams we call the Lake District is a cherished blessing to know, love and share. As we go about our daily routines, we may take a fleeting moment to reflect that someone, somewhere, will be tramping up a lonely gill or along an airy ridge, peering from a lofty summit or gazing across 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

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Bird's-eye view of Borrowdale from Rosthwaite Fell (photo: Maggie Allan)

## STARTING POINTS

Location		Description	GR	Access	Ascents described from here
1	Rosthwaite	Car park in centre of village	257 148	NT, B	Castle Crag, Grange Fell, Great Crag, High Spy
2	Quayfoot	NT car park in woods off road bend	253 168	NT, B	Grange Fell
3	Grange-in-Borrowdale	Sizeable parking area beside B5289 N of village	256 176	FP, B	Castle Crag, Catbells, Grange Fell, High Spy, Maiden Moor
4	High Brandelhow Jetty	Jetty served by the Keswick Launch	252 197	L	Catbells, Maiden Moor
5	Hawse End Jetty	Jetty served by the Keswick Launch	251 213	L	Catbells
6	Uzzicar	Large layby S of farm access-track junction	232 217	FP	Catbells
7	Chapel Bridge, Little Town	Sizeable layby beside bridge (fills quickly at peak times) or nearby field at Little Town	231 193	FP	Catbells, High Spy, Maiden Moor
8	Black Sail Youth Hostel	Walk/bike-in youth hostel at the head of Ennerdale	195 123	F	Brandreth, Great Gable, Green Gable
9	Gatesgarth	Farmer-owned car park with overflow in yard behind buildings	195 150	PP, B	Brandreth, Great Gable, Grey Knotts
10	Honister Pass	Large visitor-centre parking area on the pass (plus NT car park beside YHA hostel)	225 135	PP, NT, B	Brandreth, Great Gable, Green Gable, Grey Knotts
11	Little Gatesgarthdale	Generous layby on road bend beside beck	230 136	FP, B	Grey Knotts
12	Seathwaite	Verge parking S of Seathwaite Bridge and in allocated field at Seathwaite Farm	235 123	FP	Allen Crag, Base Brown, Brandreth, Glaramara, Great End, Great Gable, Green Gable, Grey Knotts, Scafell Pike, Seathwaite Fell

Location		Description	GR	Access	Ascents described from here
13	Seatoller	Car park next to bus turning area	245 137	NT, B	Castle Crag, Glaramara, Grey Knotts, High Spy, Rosthwaite Fell
14	Stonethwaite	Copious verge parking beside road to hamlet; fills quickly at peak times	261 138	FP	Allen Crag, Eagle Crag, Glaramara, Great Crag, Rosthwaite Fell, Sergeant's Crag, Ullscarf
15	Watendlath	NT car park in hamlet	276 163	NT	Bell Crag, Grange Fell, Great Crag, High Seat, High Tove, Ullscarf
16	Surprise View	Two generous parking areas in woods beside road	268 189	FP	Grange Fell, High Seat
17	Ashness Bridge	Large car park S of bridge	269 196	FP	Bleaberry Fell, Grange Fell, High Seat, Walla Crag
18	Kettlewell	Popular car park beside B5289	267 195	NT, B	Grange Fell
19	Great Wood	Large car park in woodland E of B5289	272 214	NT, B	Bleaberry Fell, Walla Crag
20	Keswick (Lake Road)	Large town-centre car park	265 233	PP, B	Bleaberry Fell, Walla Crag
21	Tewet Tarn verge	Very limited verge parking on road bend	306 239	FP	High Rigg
22	St John's in the Vale Church	Parking area by church (give preference to churchgoers)	306 225	FP	High Rigg
23	Causeway Foot, Naddle valley	Layby opposite Causeway Foot Farm	293 218	FP, B	Bleaberry Fell, High Seat
24	Rough How Bridge	Verge parking along old road parallel to A591	300 206	FP, B	Bleaberry Fell, High Seat, Raven Crag
25	Legburthwaite (A591 layby)	Verge/layby parking at junction	316 194	FP, B	High Rigg
26	Thirlmere Dam	Small parking area on W side of dam	307 189	FP	Raven Crag



## STARTING POINTS *continued*

Location		Description	GR	Access	Ascents described from here
27	Armboth	Large United Utilities car park with toilets	305 172	PP	Armboth Fell, High Tove, Raven Crag
28	Dob Gill	Large United Utilities car park with toilets	316 140	PP	Armboth Fell, Bell Crag, Ullscarf
29	Steel End	Small United Utilities car park	320 130	PP	Ullscarf
30	Old Dungeon Ghyll, Great Langdale	NT car park	286 061	NT, B	Allen Crag, Scafell Pike
31	Brotherilkeld	Generous layby W of phonebox at the foot of Hardknott Pass	210 011	FP	Scafell Pike
32	Wha House	Small car park N of Wha House Farm	200 009	FP	Scafell Pike
33	Wasdale Head	NT car park	182 075	NT	Scafell Pike
34	Wasdale Green	Lots of rough parking (but fills quickly in season)	186 085	FP	Great End, Great Gable, Scafell Pike

FP – free parking

PP – pay parking

NT – National Trust (free to members)

B – on a bus route (in season)

L – served by the Keswick Launch (in season)

F – only accessible by foot or bike



*Scots pine on Castle Crag*



## INTRODUCTION

### Valley bases

No valley better epitomises the romance of mountain Lakeland than Borrowdale. From Keswick, venture past Derwentwater and through the dramatic Jaws of Borrowdale to the traditional settlements of Rothwaite, Seatoller and Seathwaite or to Stonethwaite, the entry-point for the wild glen of Langstrath. To the west the Newlands valley holds further allure, and to the east lies the Thirlmere valley, offering quiet ascents onto the unfrequented central ridge from Bleaberry Fell to Ullscarf. In between hides the upland sanctuary of Watendlath.

Trees lend so much to the early charm, but with altitude you will find raw scrawny fell country – domain of stocky Herdwick sheep – and mighty crags: serious mountain terrain demanding the utmost respect and preparation. Many ascend the Scafell massif and Great Gable from Seathwaite-in-Borrowdale, with such ascents requiring smart choices in regard to route, timing and weather. This guide will help you make these choices, but sound navigation and the proper use of a map are also essential skills.

*Looking to the distant Blencathra from the main walkers' highway from Honister to Green Gable*



## Facilities

Keswick is known far and wide as the capital of Lakeland adventure. Easily accessed, it has hotels, guest houses, B&Bs and humbler pitches to serve all manner of preferences and budgets. Hotels, pubs and tearooms abound, reflecting the special place the region holds in people's hearts.

## Getting around

Until the early 1970s Keswick was served by a train from Penrith, but now the car and bus are supreme. Throughout the year the 555, X5/X4 and Borrowdale Rambler bus services operate regularly along the primary valley roads, propelling you to and from the wondrous fells.

Parking is not to be taken for granted anywhere in this popular 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 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 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'.

## 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.

This guide is divided into two parts: 'Fells' describes ascents of each of the 28 fells covered by this volume, arranged in alphabetical order; 'Ridge routes' describes a small selection of popular routes linking these summits.



Lane to Rosthwaite (photo: Maggie Allan)



its wider context. That said, beware of the green dashed lines on Ordnance Survey maps. They are public rights of way but no guarantee of an actual route on the ground. Take care to study the maps and diagrams provided carefully and plan your route according to your own capabilities and the prevailing conditions.

Please do not rely solely on your mobile phone or other electronic device for navigation. Local mountain rescue teams report that this is increasingly the main factor in many of the incidents they attend.

The author has taken care to follow time-honoured routes and keep within bounds of access, yet access and rights of way can change and are not guaranteed. Any updates that we know of to the routes in this guide will be made available on the Cicerone website, [www.cicerone.co.uk/1038](http://www.cicerone.co.uk/1038), and we are always grateful for information about discrepancies between a guide-book and the facts on the ground, sent by email to [updates@cicerone.co.uk](mailto:updates@cicerone.co.uk) or by post to Cicerone Press, Juniper House, Murley Moss, Oxenholme Road, Kendal, Cumbria, LA9 7RL.

### Additional online resources

Summit panoramas for all of the fells in this volume can be downloaded for free from the guide page on the Cicerone website ([www.cicerone.co.uk/1038](http://www.cicerone.co.uk/1038)). You will also find a ticklist of the summits in the Walking the Lake District Fells series at [www.cicerone.co.uk/fellranger](http://www.cicerone.co.uk/fellranger), should you wish to keep a log of your ascents, along with further information about the series.



## 1 ALLEN CRAGS 784M/2572FT

<b>Climb it from</b>	Seathwaite <b>12</b> , Stonethwaite <b>14</b> or Old Dungeon Ghyll (Great Langdale) <b>30</b>
<b>Character</b>	Rugged and remote, yet with handy access from the high point of the ancient pass between Great Langdale and Wasdale
<b>Fell-friendly route</b>	4
<b>Summit grid ref</b>	NY 236 085
<b>Link it with</b>	Glaramara or Great End
<b>Part of</b>	Glaramara ridge walk

Defined by deep valleys and sustaining the 2000ft contour for more than two miles, a ridge leads north from the saddle north of Esk Hause, with Glaramara at its mid-point. Allen Craggs forms its southernmost high point, the first rise on a perennially popular fell-top trek. It's a modest bag when set against the likes of neighbouring Great End, but a good objective for those all-too-frequent days when the Scafells are obscured by mist.

The best route climbs from the Grains Gill valley (1–5), from which aspect the fell's rougher and more characterful qualities are foremost. In truth, only

from this side can the fell be considered a primary objective for a circular fell walk. The greater ridge walk, via Allen Crag, Glaramara and Rosthwaite Fell, goes north from the saddle below Esk Hause, having come up from Stonethwaite by way of Lonely Langstrath (6) or by Grains Gill, or even from Seathwaite via Styhead Pass.

### Ascent from Seathwaite 12 off map N

*Adventurous options breaking pathless from the regular valley way*

**Via Allen Gill** → 4.5km/2¾ miles ↑ 610m/2000ft ⌚ 2hr 25min

**1** Follow the valley bridlway through the farmyard via gates, advancing to **Stockley Bridge**, from where two handsome pack-horse-bridge routes divide. After the hand-gate turn left, beside the wall, on a path up **Grains Gill**. There are several options from this point: Routes **2–5**.

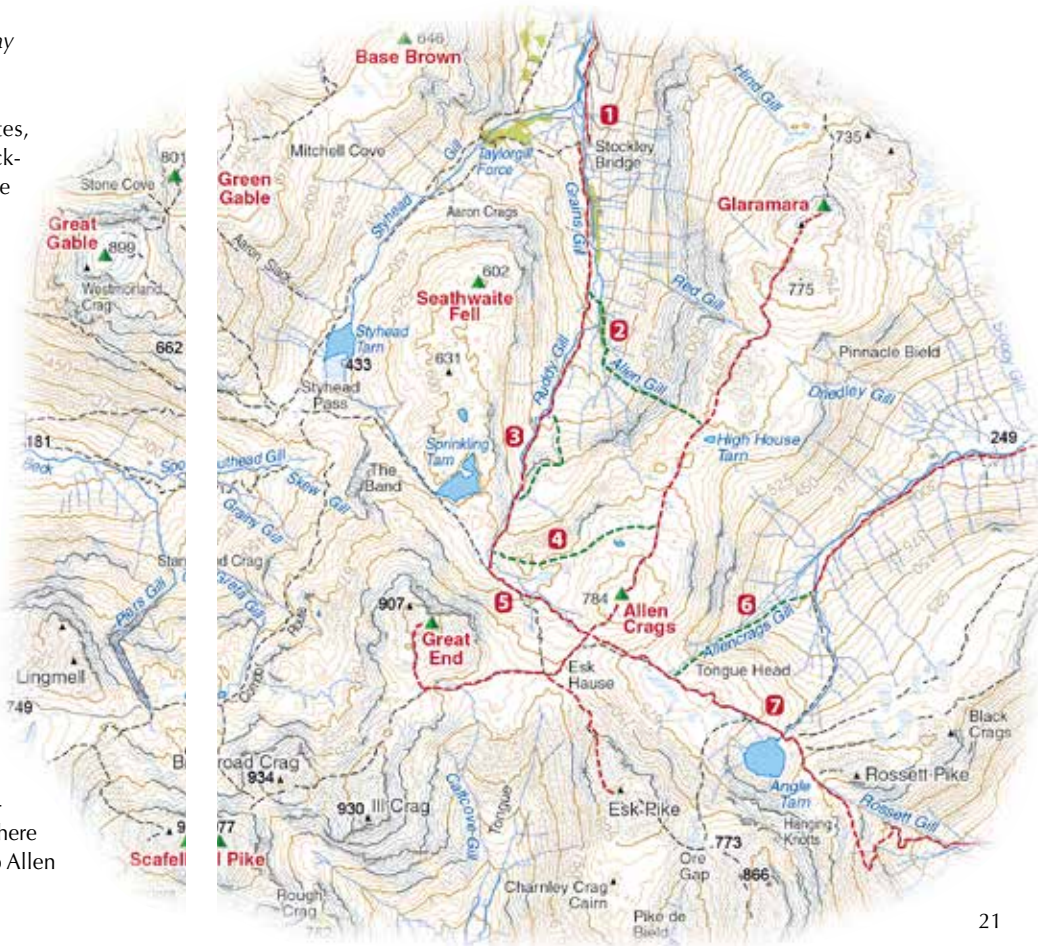
**2** Having followed Route **1**, shortly after the next hand-gate, with obvious path pitching, bear half-left down to a broad wooden footbridge and then head upstream. It is easier to remain at beck level initially. With the approach of the wooded gorge, bear left up the bank to enjoy a grandstand view of the waterfall in Ruddy Gill. Follow the moraine ridge. When you come to **Allen Gill** follow it on the right bank, climbing steeply, keeping to the grass until you reach the source, just below the ridge path from Glaramara. Go right and pass immediately to the right of **High House Tarn**, from whose northeastern edge you can get a great view of the Langdale Pikes with the tarn in the foreground. Even more photogenic is the tiny rock-girt Lincomb Tarn, set among the outcrops just a little further up (to the south). Follow the stony ridge path direct to the summit cairn.

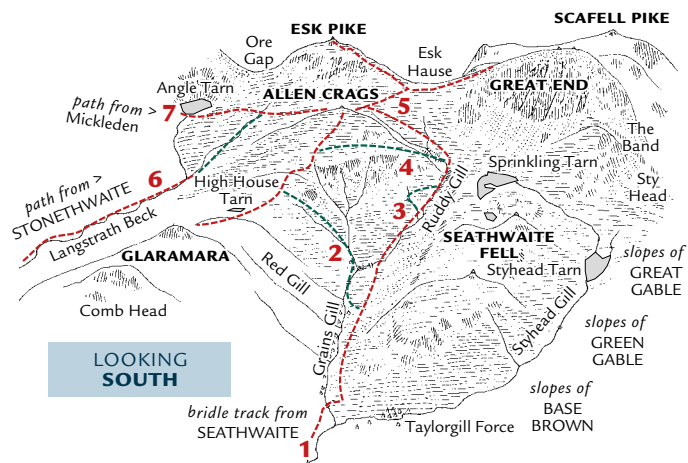
**Via Ruddy Gill** → 4.7km/3 miles ↑ 610m/2000ft ⌚ 2hr 40min

**3** Having followed Route **1**, the less taxing option is to stay with the sheltered **Ruddy Gill** path, scene of considerable pitching work in recent years. This path advances over a footbridge where the gill begins to race dramatically down a gully and plunges into Allen

Gill to form Grains Gill. Further upstream it is worth stepping aside to admire the cascades. Stay with the modern hard trail to the saddle.

If you prefer a grassy climb, take a short diversion after the footbridge, off to the left, on an old path. Bear half-left as you approach a second ford across a gill. A little-used grass path leads up the bank. Pass a small flat outcrop and bear half-left (without a path) onto the narrow grassy moraine rigg





(ridge). Then, rising easily to the skyline, bear right, crossing two tiny gills. Mount the boiler-plate slab above the prominent outcrop to gain a broad marshy shelf. Skirt this to the right (west), passing a small cairn. Cross a further gill then bear right, passing a small cairn, to regain the modern path.

**4** Just as the gill turns sharp left (east) at the end of Route **3** you can climb off the main path onto an attractive, undulating spine-of-rock ridge (no path). With the craggy slope of Allen Crag ahead, bear half-left up the prominent grass ramp,



traversing wet ground between outcrops to gain the ridge path north of the fell-top. Join the path and turn back south to the summit.

**5** The normal course, having set out on the Grains Gill/Ruddy Gill approach with Routes **1** and **3**, is to ford **Ruddy Gill** as it bends left and keep beside the red-soiled ravine, ignoring the right-hand branch path leading directly to Esk Hause. At the shallow saddle cross-paths go left (north) up the loose trail to the summit.

### Ascent from Stonethwaite **14** off map NE

Via Langstrath → 9km/5½ miles ↑ 685m/2245ft ☉ 3hr

*A 'sneaking up' process among scenery that encourages the mind to wander too, allowing you to get away from it all*

**6** Follow the main track from the hamlet. As you turn into the Langstrath valley choose between the bridleway (east side), reached over the footbridge, and the footpath (west side); the former is better underfoot. All the really good scenery – of which there is plenty – is exhausted by the time you reach the footbridge at the foot of Stake Beck. Cross the bridge and ignore the rising bridleway, which takes the Cumbria Way into Great Langdale. Continue on the narrow trod running along the base of Rossett Pike. The path copes well with the inevitable marsh. Where **Allencrags Gill** and the stream from Angle Tarn meet, ford and follow Allencrags Gill on an intermittent path, climbing to **Tongue Head**. Turn right towards the saddle, where, setting its sights on Allen Crag, the path winds northeast to the top.



## Ascent from Old Dungeon Ghyll, Great Langdale 30 off map E

**Via Rossett Gill** → 6.7km/4¼ miles ↑ 690m/2265ft ⌚ 2hr 45min

*A long valley walk-in connects you with the main thoroughfare up to the hause.*

**7** From the Old Dungeon Ghyll car park advance with the valley bridle-way along Mickleden to the footbridge, where the Stake Pass and Rossett Gill paths fork. Go left. The old pony route is currently being enhanced with sturdy pitching on the zig-zag beneath Bowfell's high buttresses. The path dips by the outflow of **Angle Tarn** and climbs **Tongue Head** to the Allen Craggs hause. A cross-wall wind-shelter just south of the hause (marked with a cross on the HARVEY map) is a key landmark to locate. Turn right for the summit.

### The summit

A single cairn on a small rock base marks this delightful top. The view is special. The Langdale Pikes, Bowfell, Esk Pike, Great End and Great Gable all feature large – a scene fit for a majestic fresco.

### Safe descents

In deteriorating conditions aim to reach the saddle on the connecting ridge (with a cross-wall wind-shelter some 60 metres further S). It is SW of the summit, a matter of eight minutes' descent on a loose but obvious trail. Turn left (E) for Langstrath (**6**) or – far better – Great Langdale (**7**) in 6.4km, or right (W) for Borrowdale, following Ruddy Gill (**5**, **3**, **1**) for just over 4.8km or continuing via Styhead Pass for Wasdale Head in 6.4km (not mapped).

### Ridge routes

**Glaramara** → 2.7km/1¾ miles ↓ 160m/525ft ↑ 130m/425ft ⌚ 1hr 10min  
Head N on the ridge path. This is one of those uncomplicated paths that never seems to get going, never clear of rock long enough to really allow you to stride out. The mid-point depression, with its cluster of pools around High House Tarn, is a place to dawdle. Beyond, the ridge bulks further and



*Allen Craggs from Sprinkling Tarn*

you cross two intermediate tops separated by the depression at the head of Red Gill. Cairns may lure you left from the trail for the fine westward view en route to the cairnless rock summit, with its snug wind-shelter.

**Great End** → 2km/1¼ miles ↓ 60m/195ft ↑ 195m/640ft ⌚ 1hr

Descend SW to the saddle and follow the clear path SW, passing the wind-shelter and rising to the multi-cairned Esk Hause. Bear right (W). The popular trail leads up into the shallow hollow of Calf Cove. On gaining the brow bear right (N), crossing the stone-free mid-ridge to either of the cairned tops.