

LAKE DISTRICT

A PICTORIAL CELEBRATION

Sketchbook

Jim Watson



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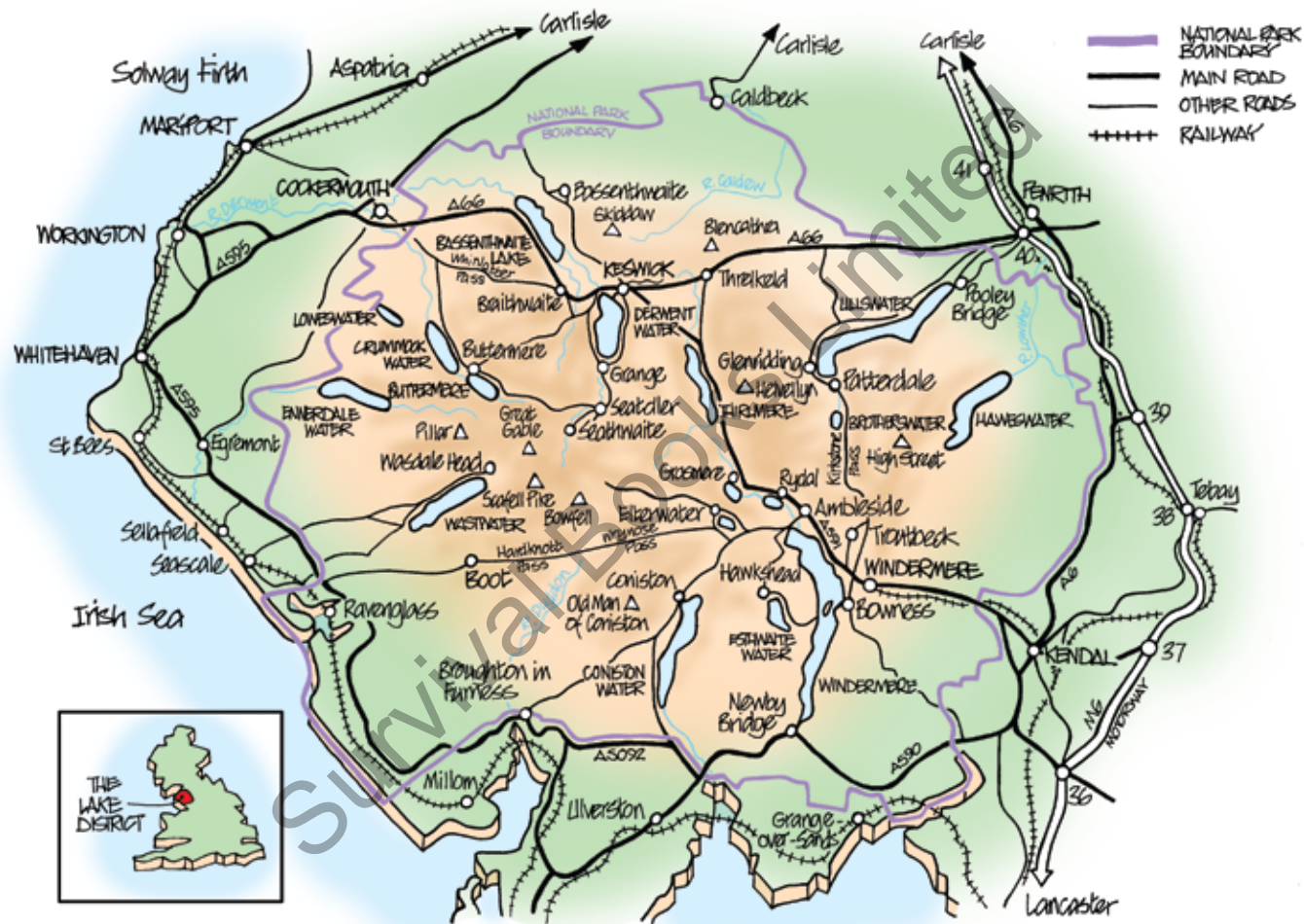
Front cover illustration:
The road to Crummock Water

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INTRODUCTION

I was born and bred in the Lake District but left at the age of 18, never quite realising how much I was leaving behind. However, my going away has been a preparation for going back. Now, years later and after numerous return visits, my eyes are open and I can see. And to me the Lake District always looks beautiful.

Though the largest of the English National Parks, the Lake District is only about 30 miles across and 40 miles from north to south, similar in size to Greater London. Traffic on the M6 motorway speeds past in not much more than half an hour, some drivers never knowing what they're missing.

The mountains are high compared with other British mountains and the lakes are large in British terms, but on the world stage they're mere molehills and ponds. It's the variety and concentration of good things packed into such a small area that makes the Lake District so special. You never have to travel far to be moved by something.

Okay, the weather can sometimes be, as they say locally, 'a bit claggy', but as someone once said (possibly an outdoor clothing salesman), 'there's no such thing as bad weather, only inadequate clothing'. And there's always that magical moment when the rain stops, the clouds part and a sunbeam dances across a valley, making you want to cry out in appreciation and gratitude.

This book is a tour around a selection of my favourite places, some are on the main tourist trails, others in quieter,

less-commercialised retreats, where life moves at a slower pace and spiritual recuperation comes easy.

My earlier books on the Lake District were illustrated with black and white line drawings but this one has been my first opportunity to use colour to try and capture just a flavour of one of the most colourful areas of Britain. The notes provide some historical background and useful facts and figures. I've suggested a few easy low-level walks, which are intended as an introduction to the particular area, rather than presenting a physical challenge. Serious walkers are more than adequately served by a multitude of books and web pages.

If you're one of the eight million people a year who visit the Lake District, I hope this book will guide you to some of the places that have given me so much pleasure over the years. If you're one of the over 40,000 people who live within the National Park, count your blessings – you're **so** lucky!

Jim Watson

Rugby, 2015

An old oven in
a wall at Hartop
(possibly to keep
milk deliveries cool)



Note: All maps in this book are schematic and not drawn to scale.



The Moot Hall

A mournful 17th century curfew bell 'clangs' on the hour

One-handed clock

St. John's Street

Lake Road

Market Place

Edward 1 granted Keswick a market charter in 1276 and weekly markets are still held here.



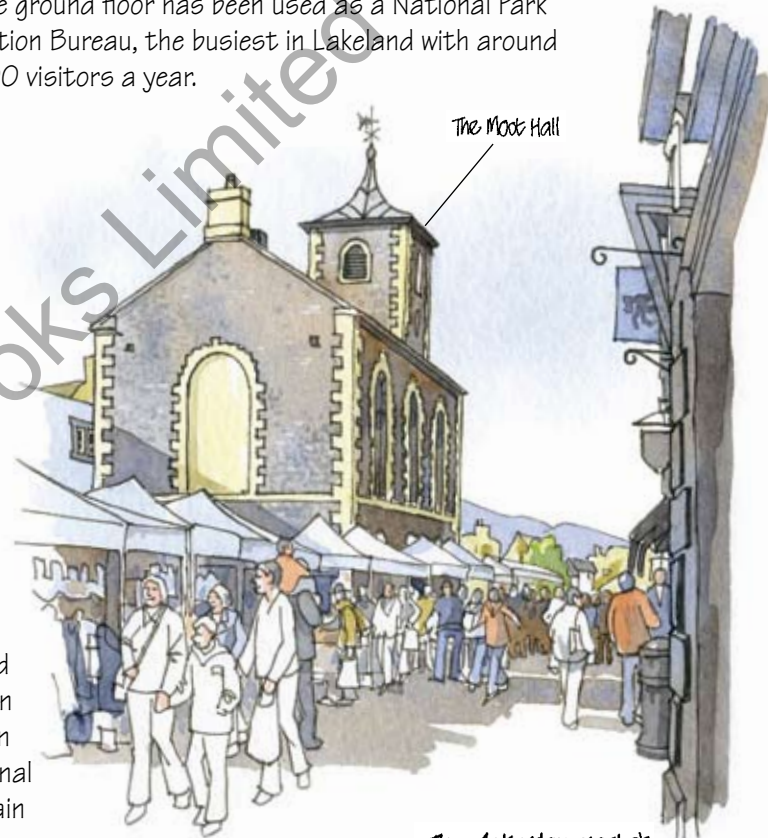
A 'quiet' day in Lake Road

KESWICK 'Queen of the Lakes'

The friendly old town is fabulously set between Derwent Water and Skiddaw with Borrowdale and the high mountains stretching seductively to the south.

Keswick developed with the 18th century mining industry and the world's first pencils were made here using graphite mined in Borrowdale. With the relocation of the pencil mill to Workington in 2008, Keswick is now totally given over to tourism. Traditional shops have been replaced by outdoor clothing stores (14 in Main Street alone at my last count!) gift shops or eateries.

The Moot Hall dates from 1813 and has seen service as a courthouse, prison, market, museum and town hall. Since 1971, the ground floor has been used as a National Park Information Bureau, the busiest in Lakeland with around 200,000 visitors a year.



The Saturday market



The Theatre by the Lake. Opened in 1999 replacing the old Blue Box Touring Theatre.



So-called because the Keswick Restaurant in Market Square was once a hardware store which sold paraffin stored in a tank in the back alley.



Treeby & Bolton. China shop, gallery and cafe in Lake Road.

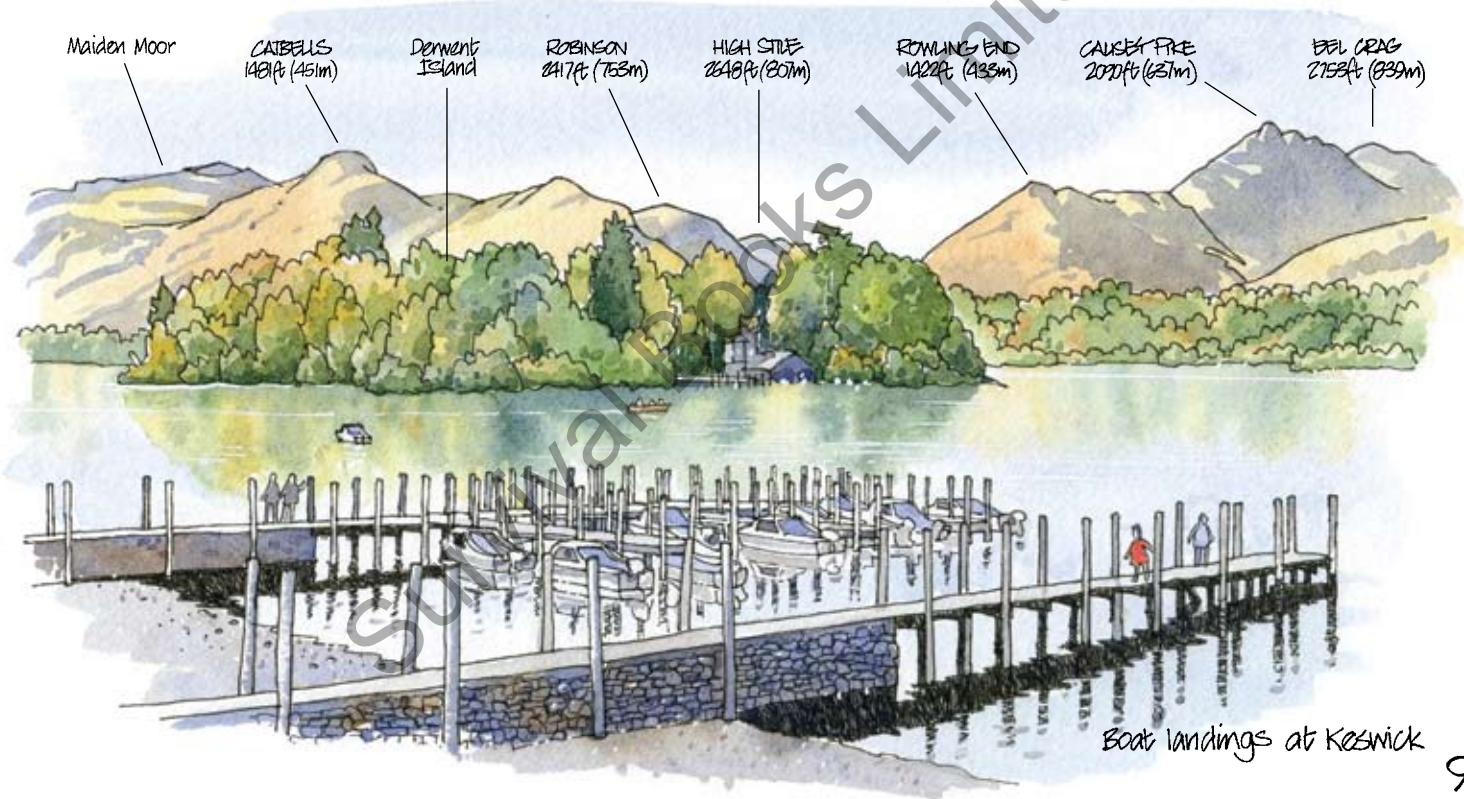
Greta Bridge at High Hill. The River Greta twists around the town before joining the Derwent as it flows out of Derwent Water then on through Bassenthwaite Lake to Cockermouth, where it contributed to the devastating floods of November 2009.

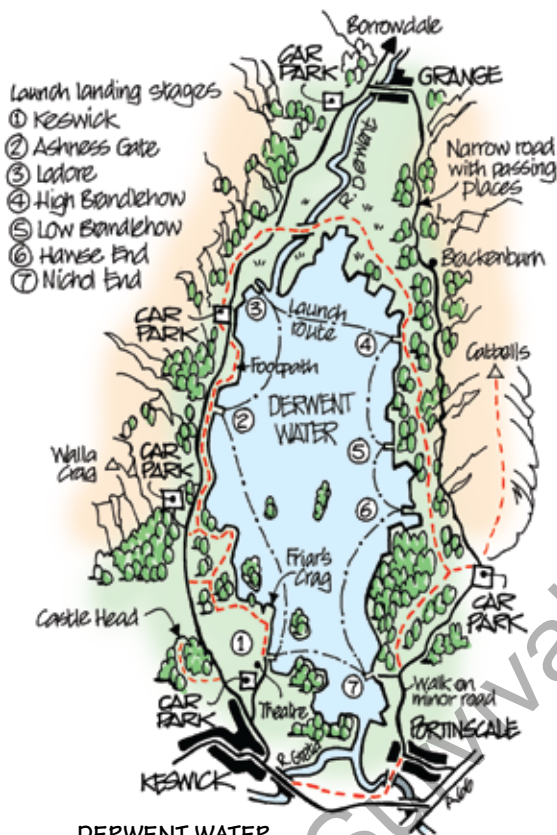


King's Head Court. One of the many yards and alleys leading off Main Street.

A visit to Keswick is incomplete without a walk down Lake Road to Derwent Water. The view down the lake from the boat landings is one of the most popular in Lakeland. The Keswick launches have run a regular service calling at seven landing stages around the lake since 1904. Two boats,

still in use, were built of Burma teak over 80 years ago and were originally for the exclusive use of Lodore Hotel residents. Parking is frustrating around the lake and in Borrowdale, so combining a launch trip with a walk is one of the most relaxing ways to enjoy the area.





DERWENT WATER

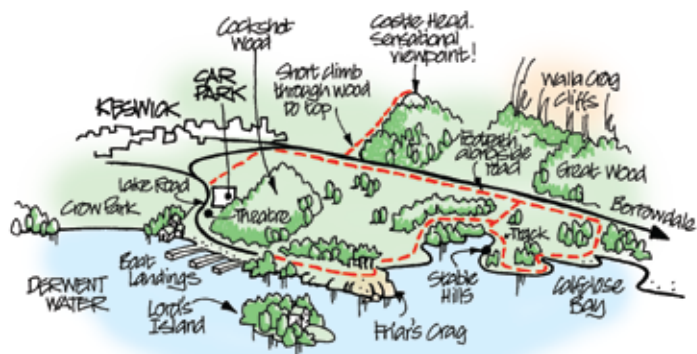
Length 3 miles
 Maximum width 1 mile
 Maximum depth 72ft
 Three islands plus nine smaller ones

DERWENT WATER

Derwent Water has long been regarded as one of the most attractive of all the lakes. Couple it with Borrowdale and in this valley, more perfectly than anywhere else in the Lake District, are to be found the three components of the Romantic Ideal – rocks, trees and water – in glorious abundance. A splendid walk of about 10 miles goes all round the lake, with only the short stretch from Nickle End to Keswick being away from the lakeside.



Brandlehow Bay

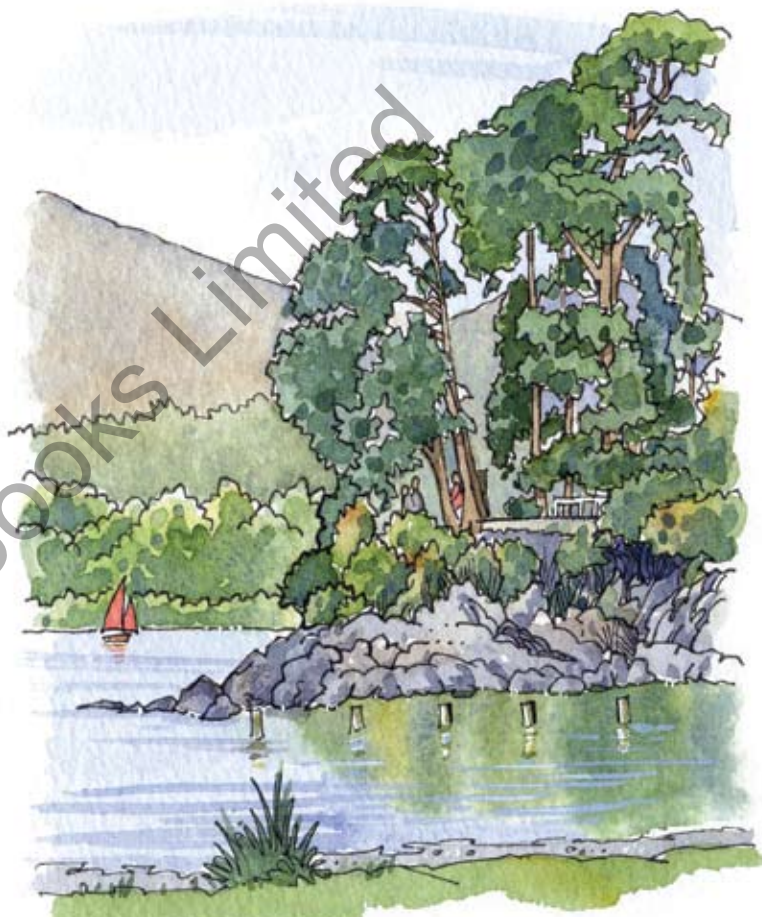


A LAKESIDE WALK - WITH EXTRAS!

Go down Lake Road to Friar's Crag. Continue across a field on an obvious path into a small wood. When you come to a track turn right to skirt Stable Mills and follow the lakeside to Calf Close Bay. Head left to find the road back to Keswick and the footpath alongside it.

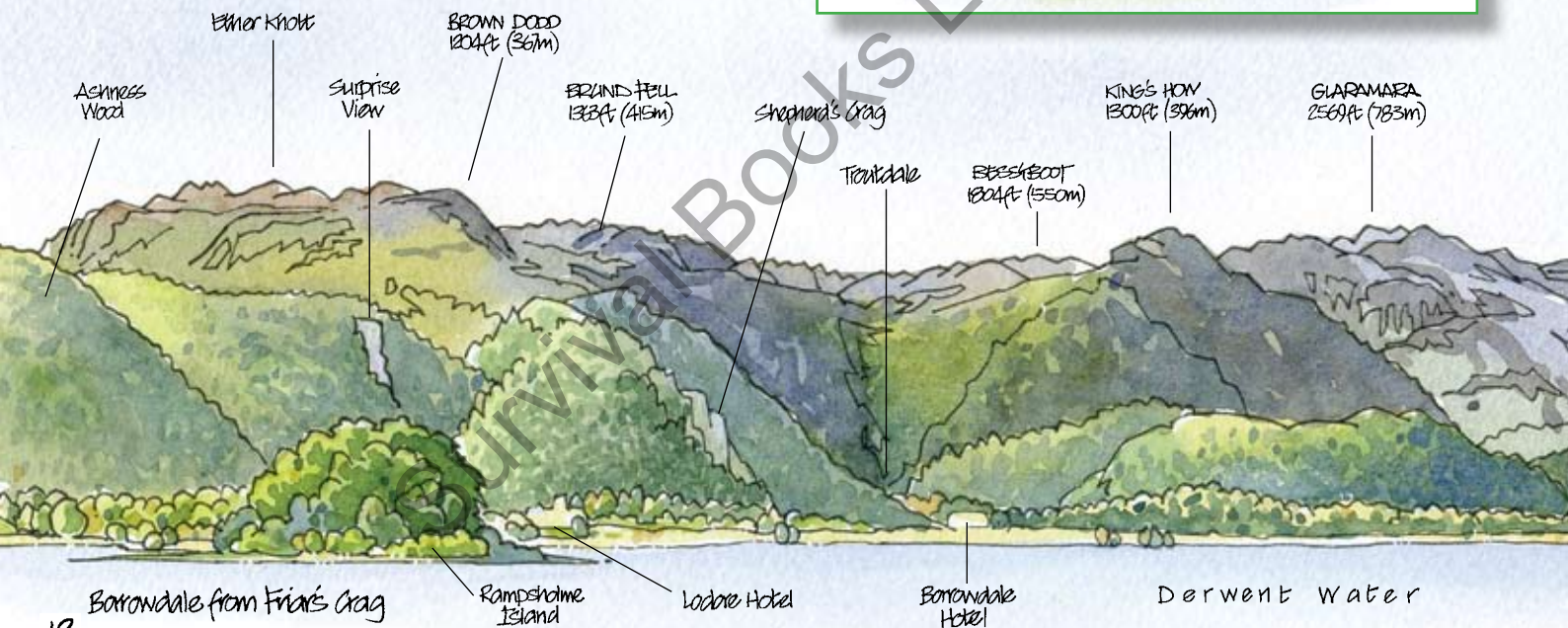
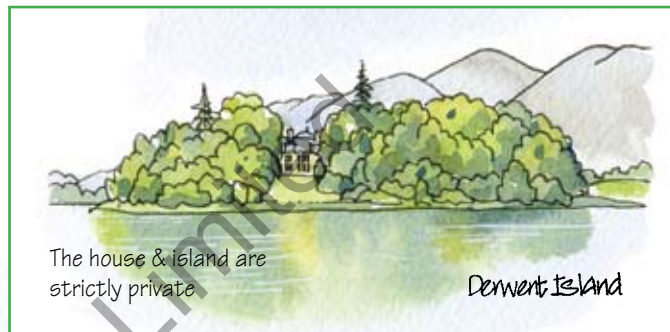
Approaching the top of a long slope there are steps in the wall on the other side of the road into Castlehead Wood. A short climb takes you to the craggy top and a sensational view of Derwent Water and Borrowdale.

Retrace your steps to the Keswick road. An enclosed path over a field leads to the Lake Road car park. A gentle walk of less than three miles but one packed with the very best of Lakeland.



Friar's Crag - one of the most visited viewpoints in Lakeland

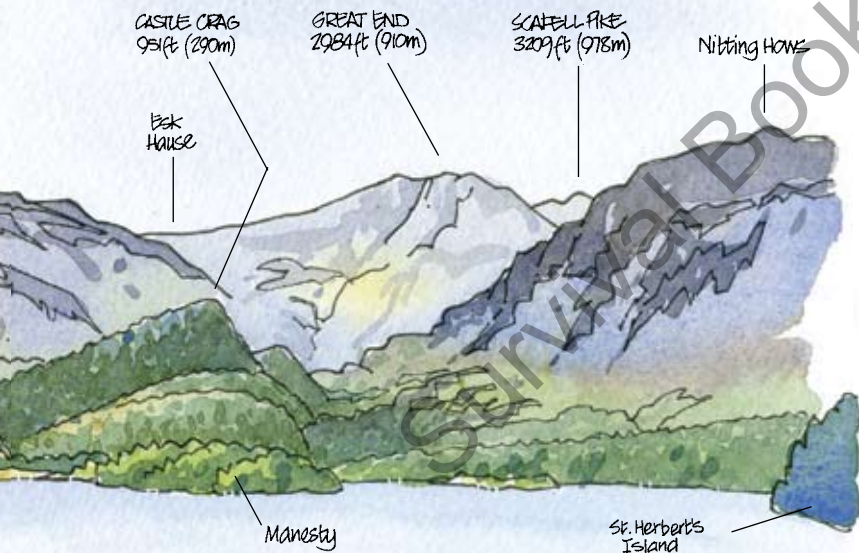
The art critic and social thinker, John Ruskin, put the view of Borrowdale from Friar's Crag in his top three in Europe, though he was prone to hyperbole. According to him Keswick was 'too beautiful to live in'. Nevertheless, the view is splendid – given clear conditions. Great End is nine miles away, so you could be peering through a lot of Lakeland mist.



Derwent Island became a sanctuary for German miners in 1565 when they were badly received by the locals. In the 18th century the eccentric Joseph Pocklington built a house and various follies on the island. The Marshall family lived here for over a century, handing ownership to the National Trust in 1951.

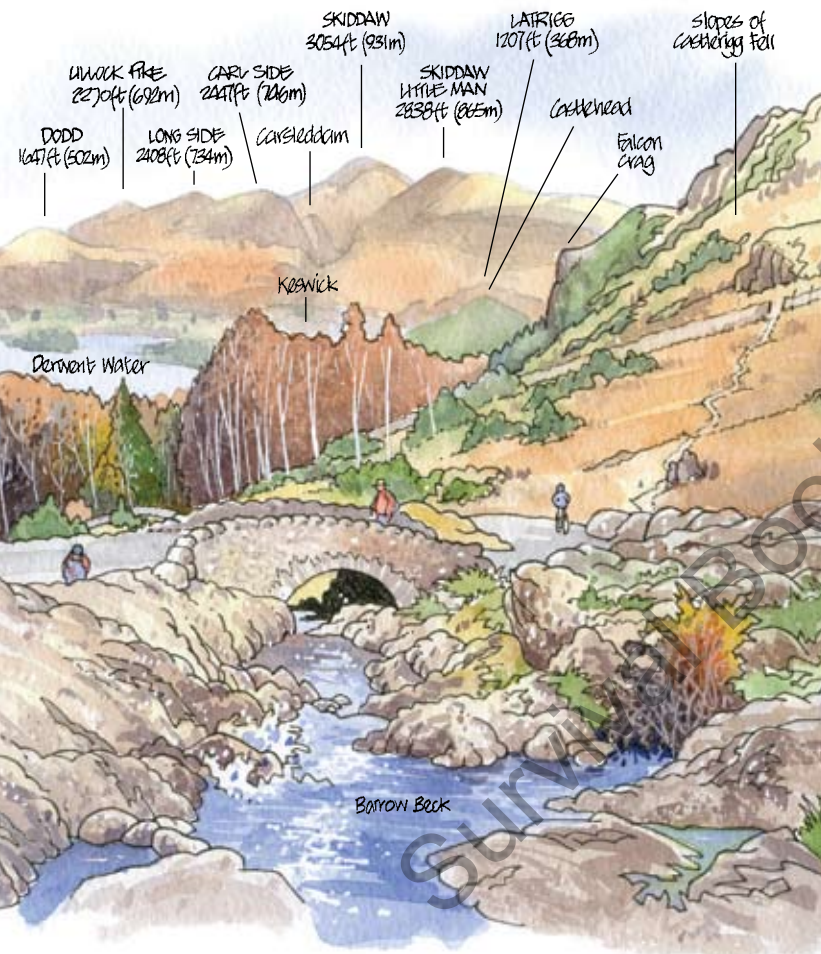
Rampsholme Island once had a bloomery for smelting iron ore, while St Herbert's Island is named after the 7th century hermit immortalised by Wordsworth.

Derwent Water even has a 'ghost' island, rising from the lake bed on a cushion of marsh gas near Lodore. Believe it when you see it!



Brandelhow Park from the Derwent Water back road

The minor road between Portinscale and Grange is a scenic delight with sensational elevated views across the lake. However, the road is narrow with only passing places for oncoming traffic in parts. Unsurprisingly, it can be horrendously busy!



Ashness Bridge - THE photographer's favourite

ASHNESS & WATENDLATH

The hamlet of Watendlath nestles at the head of a Lake District 'hanging valley', 600ft above the surface of Derwent Water. The tiny tarn, packhorse bridge and a huddle of farm buildings is one of the most photographed compositions in Lakeland. Hugh Walpole, who lived across the lake at Brackenburn and is buried in St John's churchyard, Keswick, set his 'Herris Chronicle' books here.

Furness Abbey records mention Watendlath as part of their estate in 1209. The area is now owned by the National Trust which resists unsuitable development and ensures that traditional sheep farming is still carried on.



You can drive to Watendlath along a narrow road with passing places, but that is to miss one of the greatest pleasures of a visit – the walk there.

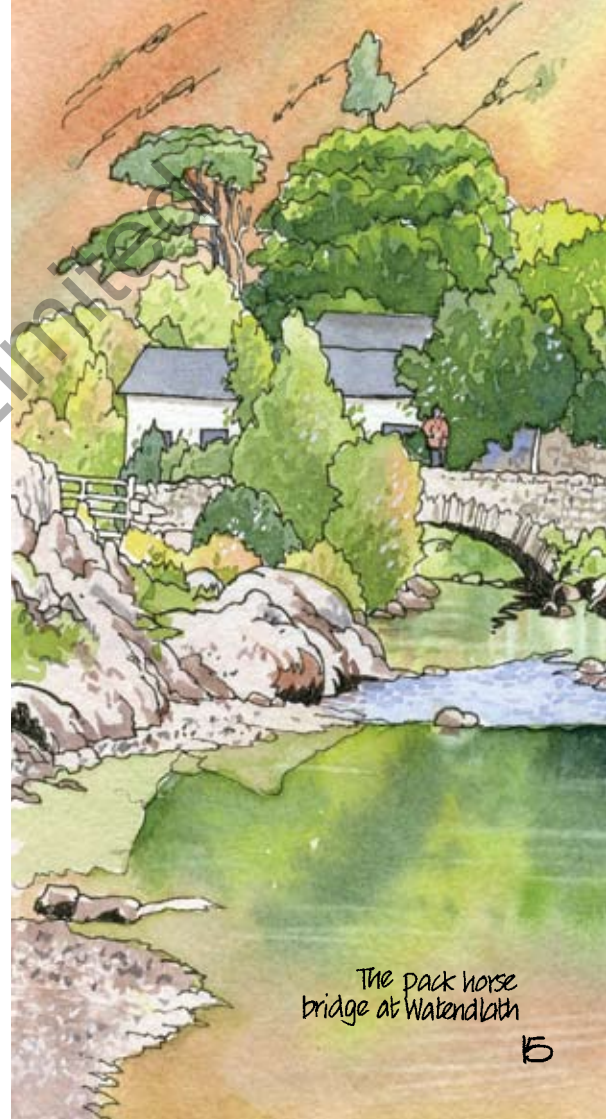
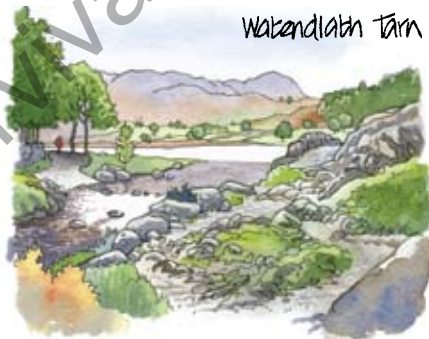
Much better to take the launch from Keswick to Ashness Gate and walk up the steep lane to Ashness Bridge and through the wood to Surprise View, both superlative viewpoints. Continue to the end of the wood, then turn right to cross the beck and take the becksides path to Watendlath. Four miles that can touch you for life.

Watendlath Beck has a short but spectacular journey to Derwent Water – down Lodore Falls, a 90ft series of cascades through a wooded gorge. Well worth a look after rain. Access is from behind the Lodore Hotel.



Watendlath has a pay car park, toilets and a small tea garden which usually closes during the winter.

Watendlath Tarn



The pack horse bridge at Watendlath

GRANGE

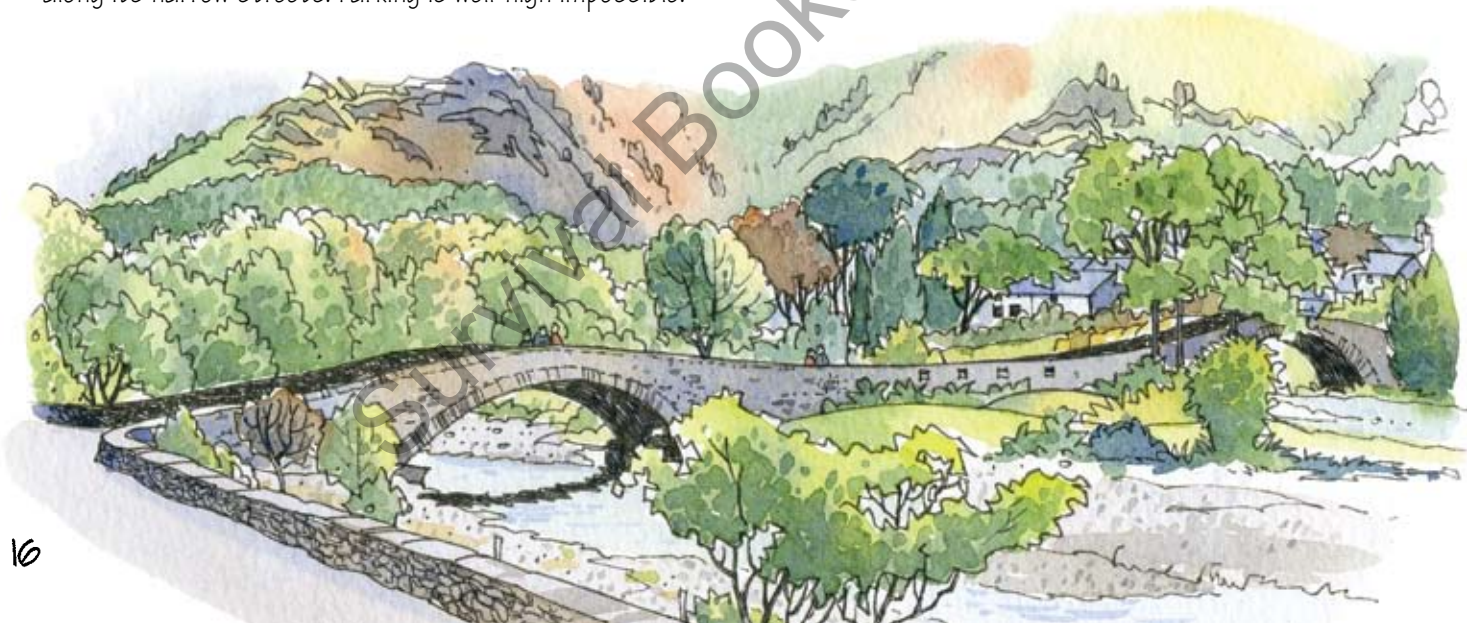
Established by Furness Abbey in the 14th century to administer its local affairs, Grange straddles Borrowdale where the valley narrows forming the aptly-named 'Jaws of Borrowdale'. The River Derwent widens as it passes the village and a bridge, built in 1675, requires two graceful arches to cross. The water in the river is remarkably clear, setting off the colours of stones which have been worn smooth by the passage of copious quantities of water.

Slate-built and genteel, modern Grange marks its ecclesiastical past by having both a chapel and a church, and continues to look after local affairs by catering for the needs of the multitudes of tourists who pass along its narrow streets. Parking is well-nigh impossible.



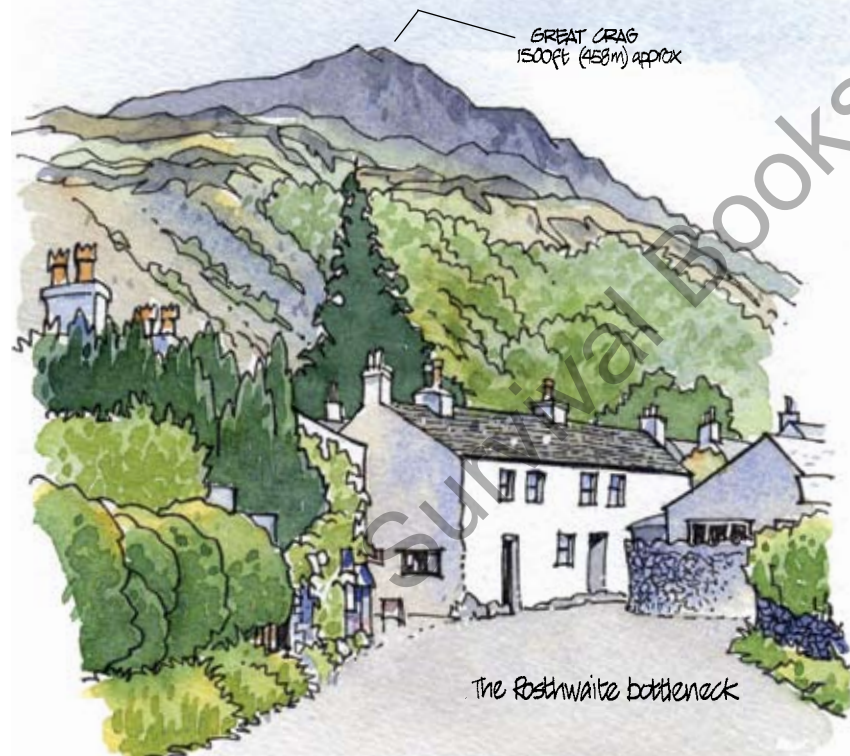
the Bowlder Stone.

A 2,000-ton Victorian curiosity situated in woodland at the foot of King's How.



ROSTHWAITE

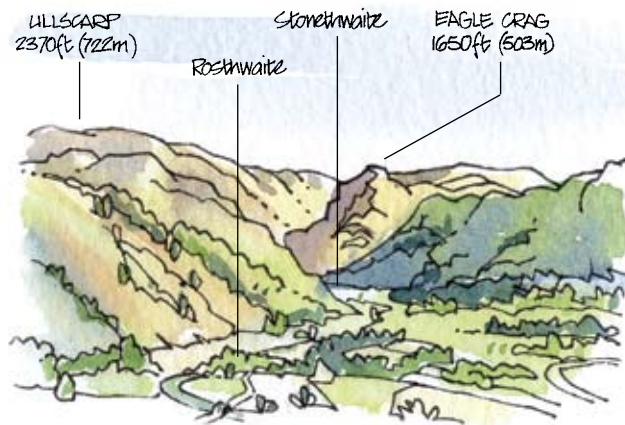
Beyond Grange, Borrowdale widens to farmland. At the centre stands Rosthwaite, raised above the flood plain of the Derwent on a rocky knoll. A passing motorist might see the hamlet as no more than an irritating bottleneck, but away from the main road this is a place of infinite nooks and crannies, whitewashed cottages and comfy lodging places. There's even a village Post Office and a car park – which fills remarkably quickly.



The Rosthwaite bottleneck



Yew Tree Farm.

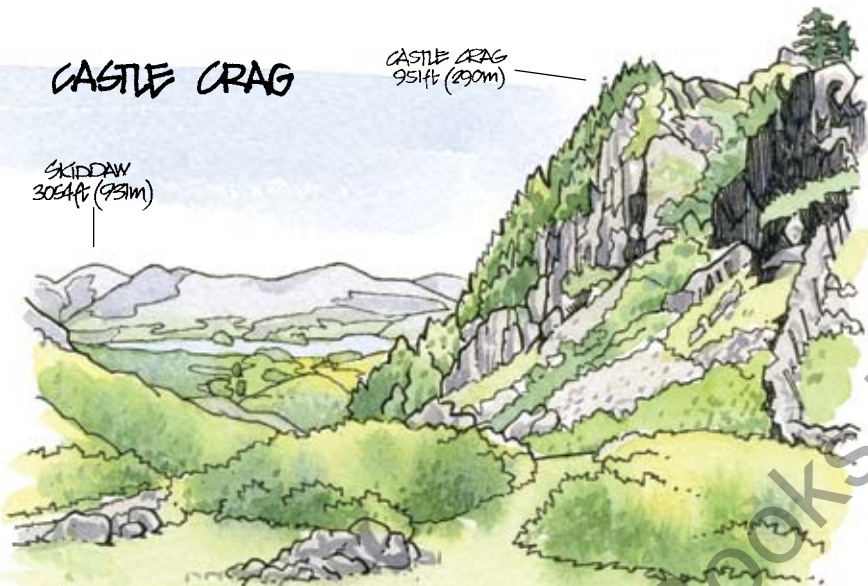


Borrowdale from Castle Crag

CASTLE CRAG

CASTLE CRAG
951ft (290m)

SKIDAW
3054ft (931m)



Castle Crag and Derwent Water from the Rosthwaite Path

'Containing no high mountain, no lake, no famous crag, no tarn, but in the author's humble submission, it contains the loveliest square mile in Lakeland – the Jaws of Borrowdale.'

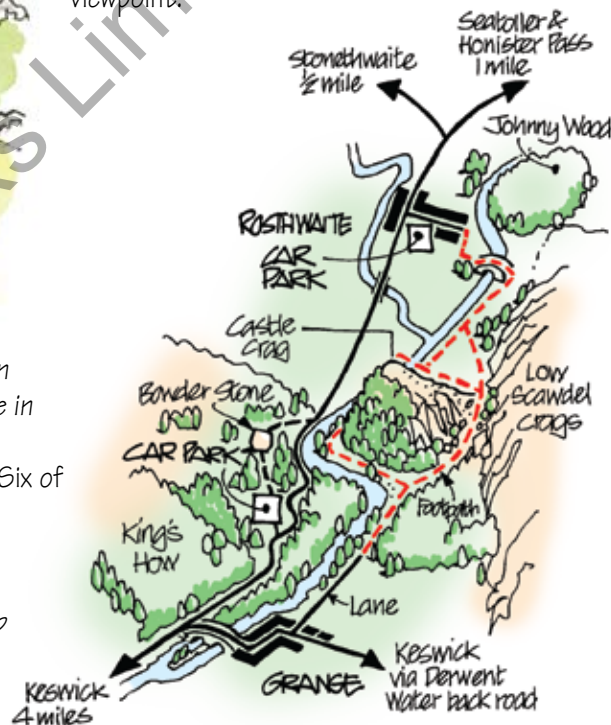
Alfred Wainwright describing the area around Castle Crag in Book Six of his *Pictorial Guide to the Lakeland Fells*.

In the same book he also wrote:

'If a visitor has only two or three hours to spare... yet desperately wants to take back an enduring memory of the district, let him climb Castle Crag.'

Amen to all that!

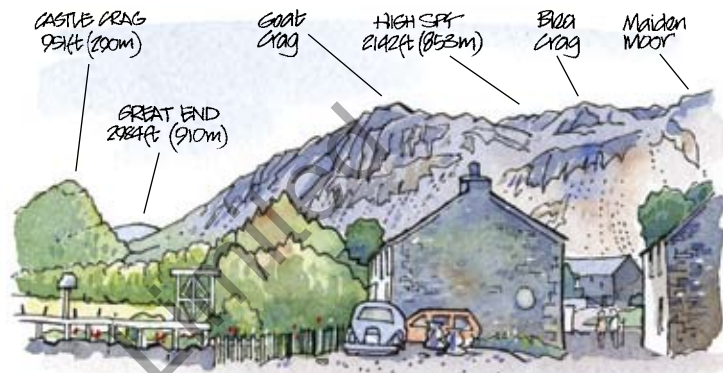
Castle Crag has no castle, is of lowly elevation and scarred by extensive quarrying – a rotten tooth in the Jaws of Borrowdale. Yet, now richly wooded, nature has turned the abrupt, rocky pyramid into a romantic and independent Lakeland talisman. It's also a fantastic viewpoint.



A circular walk of no more than three miles takes in most of Wainwright's 'loveliest square mile'.

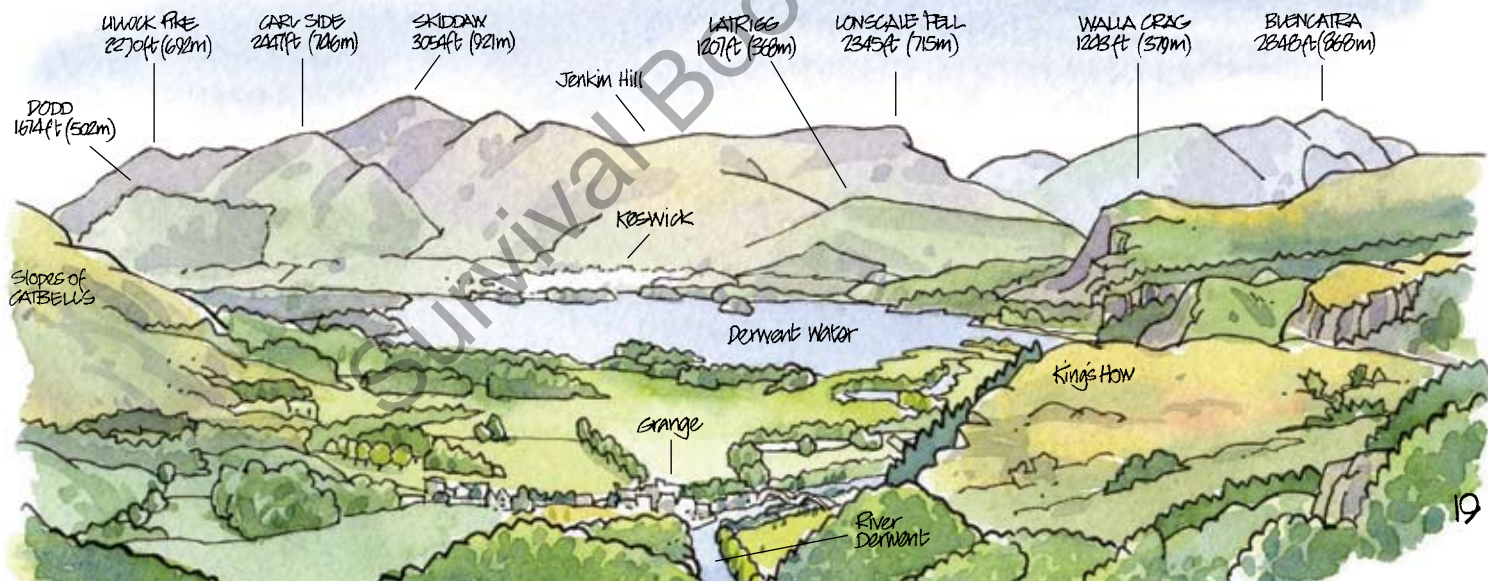
Cross the packhorse bridge over the Derwent out of Rothwaite and take the obvious path to Castle Crag. The ascent, up a slate spoil heap, looks daunting but is perfectly safe. The grassy top has long falls on all sides, so take care.

Descend the crag and go through the wood to the riverside. Take the lane on the left to visit Grange. Retrace your steps and follow the river around the base of Castle Crag back to Rothwaite.



The view south from Grange

The view north from Castle Crag Summit





In medieval times most of Borrowdale belonged to the mighty Furness Abbey but Watendlath, Longstrath and Seathwaite were owned by the equally important Fountains Abbey in Yorkshire. With two large landowners rubbing shoulders there were the inevitable disputes.

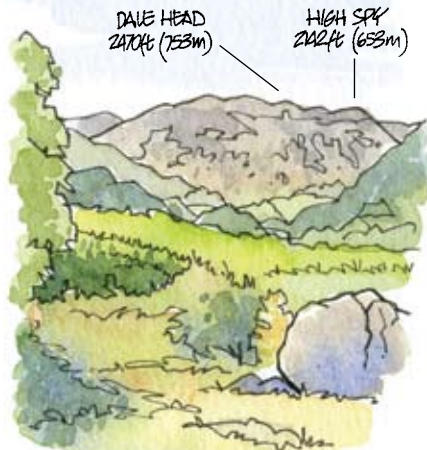
STONETHWAITE

Only a couple of miles long but, Stonethwaite, a tranquil side valley off Borrowdale, has all the attributes of classic Lakeland: wooded slopes, fearsome crags, a lively beck and one of the prettiest hamlets in the district.

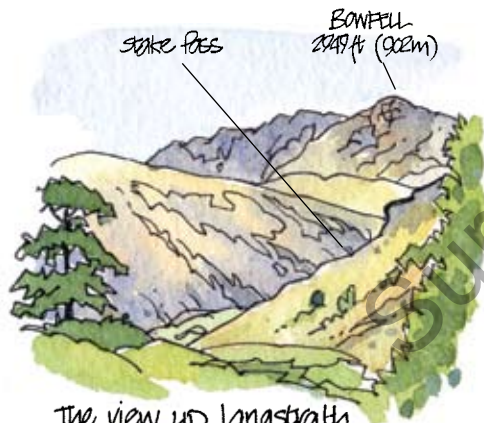
The narrow road dwindles out at a campsite and the rest of the valley is left to walkers, some who will climb up Longstrath and cross Stake Pass into Great Langdale. Others take Greenup Gill to the left of Eagle Crag and go over to Grasmere.



A classic Lakeland cottage at Stonethwaite



The view back to Borrowdale



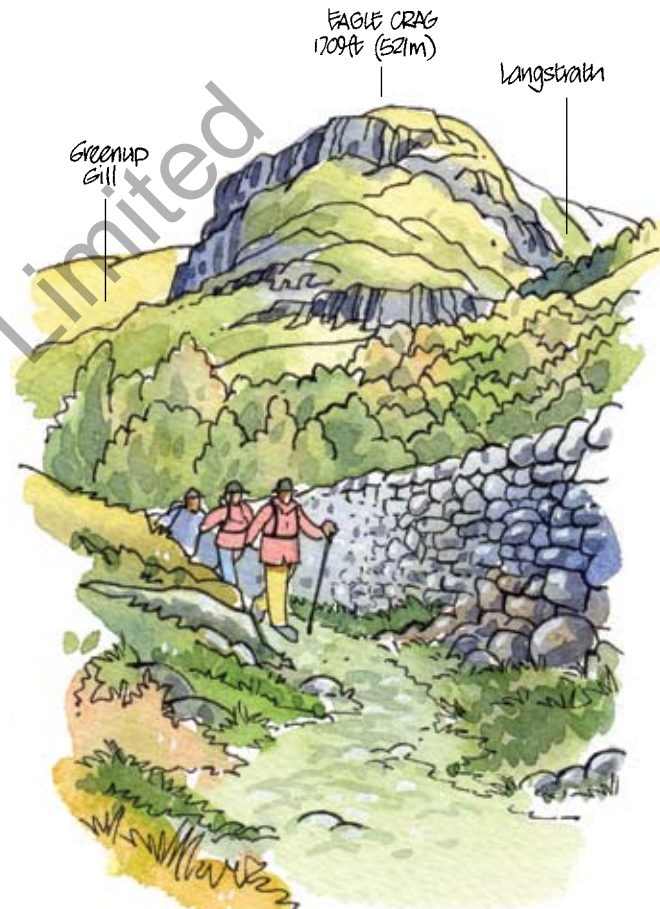
The view up Langstrath

A circular walk of around four miles up one side of Stonethwaite Beck and down the other is an excellent introduction to the wild and wonderful topography of the valley.

From Rosthwaite walk south along the narrow main road. At the first junction turn left to pass the pretty Borrowdale church and further on the even prettier hamlet of Stonethwaite itself. The great buttress of Bull Crag towers above as the way ahead becomes more open.

Beyond a becksideside campsite the route swings right, into the wilds of Langstrath. Find a footbridge and cross the beck.

The return to Rosthwaite is on a well-trodden part of the Cumbria Way with some great fell views. It also passes some delectable – and cold! – bathing pools in the beck.

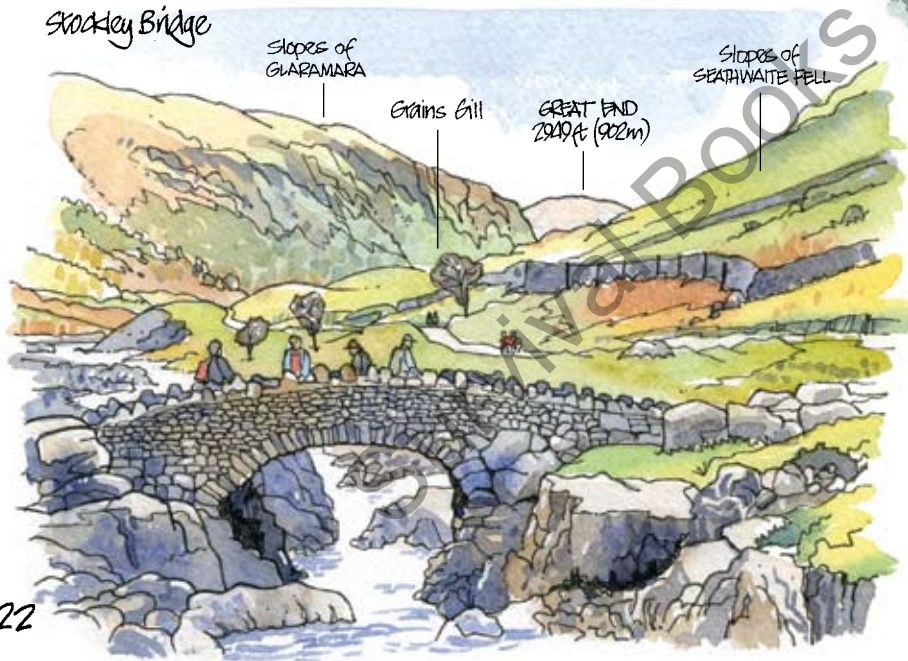


The return path to Rosthwaite

SEATHWAITE

The most southerly point of the long Borrowdale valley and a settlement of only a few farm buildings, but Seathwaite is nationally famous as the wettest inhabited place in England. It's also well-known and well-loved by fellwalkers – to whom wet weather is frequently a way of life – as the gateway to Paradise, the great fells of Lakeland. Popular routes to Scafell Pike, Great Gable and Glaramara begin and end here. On a fine summer's day – it does happen – Seathwaite can seem like Piccadilly Circus.

Stockley Bridge



Seathwaite Farm

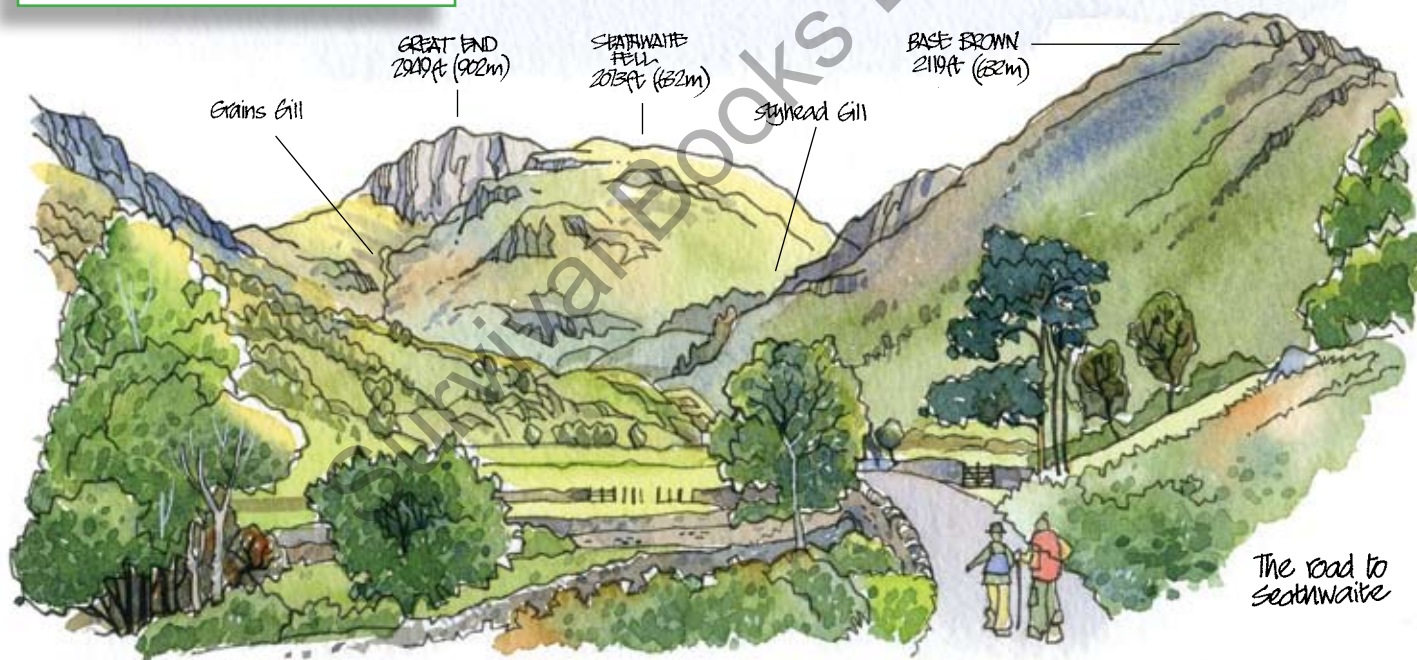
Around 140in of rain falls on Seathwaite in an average year. In September 1966, five inches of rain fell in one hour. The resulting flood swept away nearby Stockley Bridge, which has since been rebuilt in its original packhorse bridge style.

Records were shattered in November 2009 when 19.29in of rain fell on Seathwaite in four days, roughly equivalent to ten months average rainfall in London. At Sprinkling Tarn, on the fells above Seathwaite, it's even wetter, measuring a prodigious average of 172.9in a year.



The hamlet of Seatoller at the foot of Honister Pass has facilities and a car park, so is a good base for walkers. A low-level route of about four miles goes up the minor road to Seathwaite and returns along the other side of the valley on a well-established footpath, part of the Allerdale Ramble.

Look out for the waterfall of Sour Milk Gill above Seathwaite and nearby, on Base Brown, the remains of 16th century plumbago (or graphite) mines which established the Keswick pencil industry. At one time plumbago was so valuable it could only be transported under armed guard. The yield gradually diminished and the last Seathwaite mine closed in 1836.



FLEETWITH PIKE
2126ft (648m)

via ferrata
crossing



slate mine
car park

HONISTER PASS

The only exit from upper Borrowdale for motorists is the climb over Honister Pass into Buttermere. With gradients of one in four and an altitude of 1,167ft, it's one of the steepest and highest in the region.

Remarkably, there was once a regular stagecoach service over the pass. It began in the 1860s and only ended when the road was properly surfaced in 1934 and the horses' hooves could not grip on the tarmac.

The characteristic light green slate seen in local walls, on rooftops and in more highly-polished form as coffee table tops or in gift shops has been mined at Honister since the late 1600s. By 1890 production had reached 3,000 tons a year and more than 100 men were employed. In those days the mine was so isolated messages to the company offices in Keswick were sent by carrier pigeon.

But the business gradually declined and in the 1980s there was a possibility of a complete shutdown. However, in 1997 the mine was reopened by new owners, Bill Taylor and Mark Weir, as a tourist attraction. Some inspired entrepreneurship, including mine tours and a hairy (but safe) Via Ferrata crossing of the Fleetwith Pike rockface high above Honister Pass, slate is back in commercial production at Honister.

Mark Weir was killed in 2011 when his helicopter crashed near the mine.

The Infiniti Bridge – so-called because if it's misty you can't see the other end – was opened in 2014 as part of the Via Ferrata on Fleetwith Pike. At 1,200 feet above the valley floor it's one of the highest in Europe and the longest in Britain.

The treeless but grassy summit plateau of Honister Pass is an excellent place to picnic, with a terrific view across Borrowdale to the Helvellyn range. It's also a good starting point for a number of fell walks: Fleetwith Pike, Dalehead and the 'easy way' up Great Gable.

The Buttermere side is more rugged than the Borrowdale one and Gatesgarthdale Beck bubbles most attractively down to Buttermere.

Lookout for sheep on the roads. They roam freely throughout this unfenced area.

