

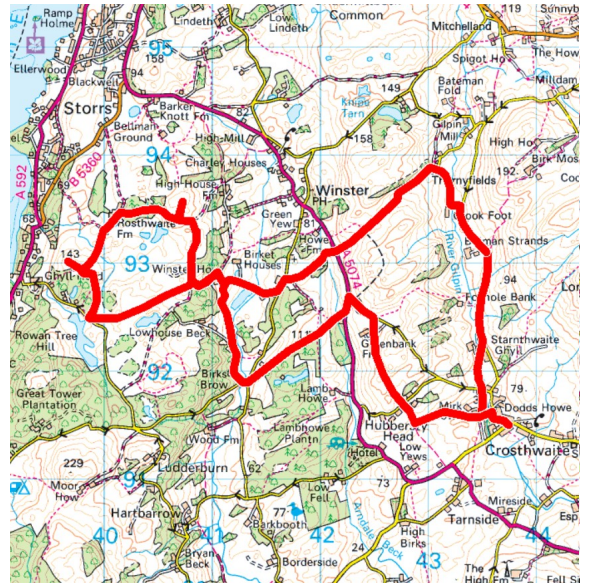
# Rosthwaite Heights and Rulbutts Hill

## Description

*Around 10 miles and 1700 ft total elevation, no strenuous climbs if taken at a steady pace.*

This is a pleasant 4/5 hour walk that crosses 18th century clapper bridges, a colourful stretch of the Winster valley and two grand houses. The walk takes us from Westmorland into Lancashire and back and at it's mid point you can stop and delight at the pretty sailing ships down on Windermere. Storrs, Belle Isle and the Windermere ferry are all to gaze down on and the picture is framed by the high fells of central Lakeland. From Rulbutts Hill you can turn around and look where you have come from as Whitbarrow touches the Kent Estuary, and the delightful upper Winster valley shows off it's pretty whitewashed houses.

Coming home crosses the knolls and hillocks typical of this part of south Lakeland and then you follow the river Gilpin back to Crosthwaite.



*Birkett Houses, Winster*



*The Furness fells from Rosthwaite Height*

## Route

The walk can be adapted for variety as several footpaths travel in broadly the same direction but the route indicated avoids road walking as far as possible.

Cross the Gilpin into Jubilee wood and then up to Mirk Howe and across the grass meadows to Head Lane. Follow this old road to Hubbersty Head and then straight forward up to Greenbank farm. A very short walk along this quiet road then crosses the busier A5074, before reaching and following ancient Hawkheath Lane (now no more than a footpath) to Birks Bridge.

From Birks Bridge, and it's ford, the walk crosses the river Winster into Lancashire and follows the path through the Winster valley to the front of Winster House. A steep incline alongside and then beyond the stable block of Winster House takes the path into Birkett House Allotments and just as it reaches the turn to Ghyll Head the walk takes a path northwards to Rosthwaite Heights.

To reach the stone seat, generously placed at Rosthwaite Heights, make sure you go straight ahead at the large oak tree situated on the grassy crossroad. There are a couple of false summits before you see the large stone seat dedicated to 'Richard'.

Rosthwaite Heights are the perfect place to stop for a rest and sustenance and to survey the lake in all its glory. Having done so retrace your steps and head back to the oak tree. From here head



*Loughrigg and Fairfield from Rosthwaite Height*





*Windyhowe Hill in early Spring*

to Rosthwaite farm and up to Rulbutts Hill which is another short deviation from the main path.

Rulbutts Hill has a view back from whence you came and also a perfect picture of the high central fells. From here the panorama takes in Crinkle Crag, Bow Fell, Langdale Pikes, Helvellyn and the Fairfield round. Looking towards the south east you see Whitbarrow nosing towards Morecambe bay.

From here you complete a circle by skirting back towards Winster House and following the tarmac footpath towards its ornate boundary gates. The walk continues up the old cart track, Crag Lane and then straight back across the A5074 into Bryan Houses allotment. You pass back into the Gilpin valley alongside the delightfully named woodland of Bow Mabble Breast before reaching the group of cottages at Thornyfields farm. This is where to check out the Westmorland chimneys.

The path back down to Gilpin to Crosthwaite takes you to Crook Foot alongside the river, then a short road section, before heading back onto the riverside footpath at Starnthwaite. You can follow this until reaching Jubilee Wood once more and back to Crosthwaite Green.

### Things to see on the walk.

The walk uses a lot of old farm tracks and cart routes that once were important routes between fields and hamlets but now are mostly just footpaths. Several enclosures are passed through, often called allotments, which were allocated during the various enclosure Acts of Parliament in the late 18th and early 19th century. Their names usually give a clue as to the beneficiary.

Bridges crossing both Gilpin and Winster rivers were originally intended for foot use only. These clapper bridges probably date from the early 18th century and pack horses with panniers would have been the most common non human traffic.

The section in the Winster Valley is ever changing in Springtime. The sunny, western banks are a glorious yellow mass of wild daffodils in March and April that gradually give way to bluebells and then in June the purple flowers of the foxglove.

There are two splendid houses set in parkland in this section. Winster House is a magnificent Georgian family home that overlooks the man made tarn which teems with bird life. The very substantial barns and stables complete what clearly is a substantial home.

The grand house inset on the floor of the valley looks to be Elizabethan in style, but was in fact only completed in 1906. The classic Westmorland hat box chimneys are a prominent feature. Compare these with a similar style set of chimneys at Thornyfields later in the walk.

The best viewpoints of the walk are at Rosthwaite Heights and Rulbutts Hill, but between these look out for the sculptures set out around the gardens of Rosthwaite Farm.



*Whitbarrow from Rulbutts Hill*

Close to the top of the hill in Bryan House allotments is a delightful little unnamed tarn. In early Summer it is home to moorhens, their chicks, and many different varieties of dragon fly.

Walking home through Starnthwaite, now a hamlet of comfortable homes, it is easy to understand how this was first established as the Starnthwaite's family mill. The waterwheel is still visible. During the 20th century, for a long time, this was developed as an approved school, where boys from Manchester would come for three months of fresh air, discipline and outdoor activities. Some of Crosthwaite's older residents remember them being walked to church at St Mary's each Sunday.

Through woodland you may see squirrels and in the heathland rabbits and deer. You will almost certainly view some quite large badger sets and in the Spring and Summer months hear almost continuous birdsong.



*Winster from the West*