

St Catherine's Tower via Lords Lot

Description

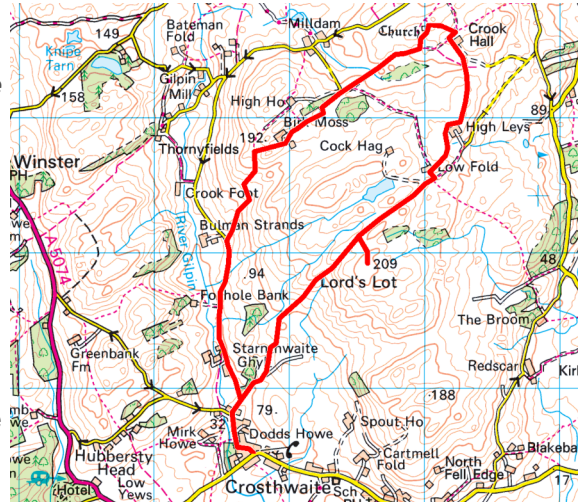
5.5 miles, around 1000ft of ascent almost all steady incline early in the walk, 2.5 hours. Great walk to blow away cobwebs before a late Sunday lunch.

A fine circular walk that can be done in either direction. My usual preference is to walk anti-clockwise and enjoy getting out of breath walking up to Lords Lot first. Lords Lot is no great height at just under 700 ft but with the exception of Lords Seat on Whitbarrow it grants some of the best elevated views in the parish.

In early Spring the gorse is a blaze of yellow and later in the year you might need to fight your way through bracken. It's easy to miss the turn to get to the top of this little Fell and it can get boggy on the path around the summit. In winter I do this as a welly walk.

The other object of the walk is the ruined tower of St Catherine's church, the former parish church for Crook.

The views on this walk are ever changing and you need to look in all directions to take them in. It's a quiet walk and you rarely encounter other walkers. As you pass through some of the hill farms do stop and have a chat. The farmers up here are friendly and don't bite in my experience.



Clapper Bridge over the Gilpin

Route

You start off by walking down the Crook road to Hardriggs and up the slight elevation beyond. The bridlepath off to the right leads, after about 250 yards, to a marked footpath beyond the left side gate. The path can be difficult to follow, but mostly travels around the side of the enclosure.

On the footpath up the hill you do need to be careful not to be distracted by some local paths and tracks that are not part of the route. In particular as you look up the fell there are two obvious green paths from the gate in the little dell. It is the right one of these you need to take. You should be able to see a small footpath sign around 150 yards ahead on this path.

Make sure you turn around occasionally to take a breath and get a great view of the Winster valley, Whitbarrow and Cartmel Fell. Towards the top of the hill, before the path flattens out, you will notice a dry stone wall on your left. If you carry on a short while you will soon find a break in the shrubs on the right and a couple of trampled paths leading to the top. You just need to make your own way up as high as you can go. It's only a 5 minute diversion. A small cairn on a rocky outcrop with convenient sitting stones lets you know you have arrived. Bide a



The path down to Bulman Strands



The Lakeland fells from Lords Lot

while and look around you.

You need to return to the public footpath you deviated from and if it's misty then go back the same way you came as you can get disoriented.

The footpath continues through a boggy area, a little too tightly alongside a barbed wire fence before a stile brings you to open sheep pasture with views north and west towards Cunswick Scar and the Howgills beyond.

You need to keep low and left through the little valley towards Low fold Farm which is beyond another stile. The walk continues towards St Catherine's through good paths past High Leys and Crook Hall.

The ruined tower of St Catherine's is visible from the path and after you have had a look around you need to make your way up an ancient cart track, now bridleway, to Birks Moss. You are now on the return to Crosthwaite Green, but still on elevated land so the views are still lovely.

Before descending down the hill take a look down past Whitbarrow, beyond which you can see Heysham power station on Morecambe Bay. Your predecessors on this route would likely have been packhorses and it's easy to envisage that as you make your way downhill towards Bulman Strands Farm in the Gilpin Valley.. Careful as you go down, this can be muddy or icy in winter.

The route takes you back to Crosthwaite Green past Starnthwaite Ghyll. If this is your only walk in the area you may wish to divert through this original water mill development alongside the river path and pass back into Crosthwaite over the 17th or early 18th century clapper Bridge.

Things to see on the walk.

The full 360 view from the top of Lords Lot. Whitbarrow to the south, Morecambe bay and the Kent Estuary. Furness fells beyond Cartmel Fell in the West and Lakeland's central fells heading north west. Fairfield, High street and Kentmere fells in the north and the Howgills, and Underbarrow Scar eastwards.

St Catherine's tower is all that remains of the original church which was used from 1516 to 1887. Restored in 1993 by English Heritage. Crook's 'new' parish church is a few hundred yards northwards on the main road junction.

On the packhorse track down to Bulman Strands is a strange, stone, box like object. It has a small hollowed chamber on the side. An older farmer remembers using this as a store for sheep markers and clippers as sheep were sheared here, using the path as an pen. Whether it was built for this purpose we can only speculate.

The gorse is beautiful in early Spring, particularly towards Lords Lot's twin, Tarn Hill. The small beef suckler herds on the upland pastures always look in prime condition in the warmer months and lambing time up here is a delight if you are a walker.



Young lambs and Yaws at Low Fold