

Lost lanes and cart tracks of Crosthwaite

Description

A walk of less than 6 miles that takes some lost lanes and tracks south of Crosthwaite and around the north of Whitbarrow. Some of these get overgrown in high summer, when long trousers are essential to avoid stings.

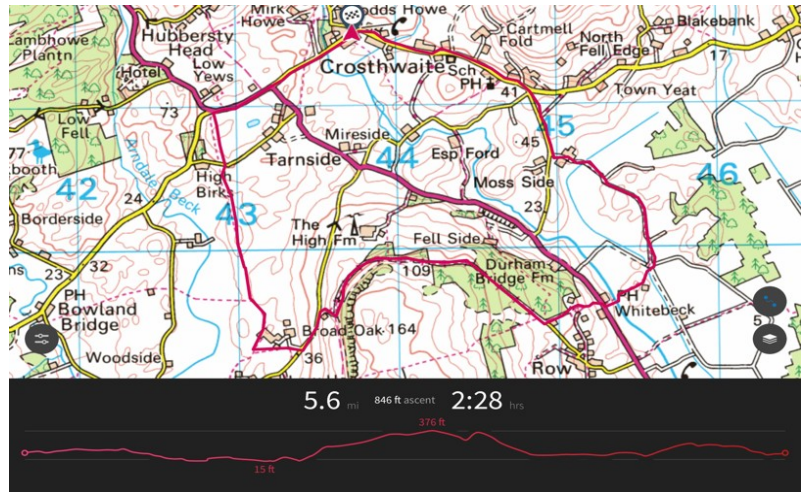
Before the days of motor transport, when travelling around the parish meant using cart tracks to access field and fell to fetch peat, hay, stone or lime, there was a network of quite important lanes and roads linking fields with farmsteads. During the last hundred years some of these have grown to become the main roads we know today, and others have fallen into disrepair becoming footpaths or mountain bike tracks. Two of these are Holmes Lane and Whitbarrow Road. This walk explores these routes, and in doing so the walker gains sufficient height to view the village spread out below.

The walk concludes over pastures and hillocks where sheep and cattle graze contentedly.

Route

Walk through the village up to St Mary's Church. Crosthwaite is a linear village linking the hamlets of Crosthwaite Green and Churchtown. Shortly after passing the Punchbowl on the right, there is a side road to the right and this should be taken. Mill Lane to the right should be ignored. This is known as Foldham Hill, though the name seems to have fallen out of use. After around 500 yards, take the farm track to Moss Side Farm and continue through the farm.

You will find yourself on a tight, enclosed



Drovers road down to Cock Moss from Lyth Lane



Looking North up the Gilpin Valley from the track above "The High"



footpath - particularly in summer, when nettles and cleavers want to attack you. This, however, is Holmes Lane which takes you down to Cock Moss Bridge. Cock Moss is a crossroads, and you should turn right up the old drovers road across Whitebeck Bridge. In spring this is bordered with swathes of pungent ransoms. The path emerges at the Lyth Valley Hotel. Cross the road here and walk along Back Lane to Row Head, which is the footpath at the top of the lay-by.

When you reach the little group of cottages at Row Head, you join quite a substantial unmade road called Whitbarrow Road which takes you round the north slopes of the Fell . After a walk round of almost a mile, leave the road and walk left past the limekiln towards Broad Oak.

The path from Broad Oak leads you north towards High Birks and you should be careful to stay to the left of the stone wall taking you there. From High Birks, carry on straight ahead over the stiles until you reach the junction of the Bowland Bridge road. From here turn right and make your way back down Totter Bank and across Lords Bridge to Crosthwaite Green.

Things to See on the Walk

On Holmes Lane just north of Cock Moss you get an idea of when this path was a Lane. An elevated section alongside the wall covers a quite elaborate tunnel. The track width is clear here, as the bridge over the tunnel has stone sides a cart width apart. This is an animal creep that would have allowed free passage of livestock between fields under a busy cart track.

The drovers track between Cock Moss and Whitebeck bridge is thought to be the first point at which cattle reared in the Lake District might have passed through the mosses on the way to Lancaster market. South of here the undrained land was too wet. The Lyth Valley Hotel is a 1930's addition in the style of a motorist hotel. It replaced The Plough Inn which stood opposite and offered similar hospitality to the drovers.

The Whitbarrow road was clearly a well used track circling the northern slopes of the Fell. In winter and early spring this offers good elevated views across to Crosthwaite village and Lords Lot.

The limekiln close to Broad Oak is one of at least five around Whitbarrow. Each provided lime to correct the acidic, peaty soils of the mosses and whitewash for the pretty farm cottages in the hamlets surrounding Whitbarrow. There is a seat in front of the limekiln which offers lovely views of the Winster Valley towards Gummings How, and the central Lakeland fells beyond.



Limekiln close to Broad Oak