



Route Information

Distance 19 kilometres (12 miles)

Ascent 790 metres (2600 feet)

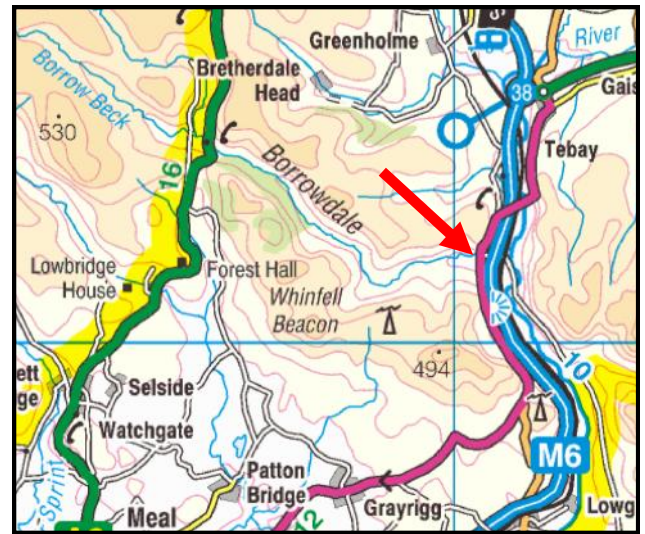
Time needed 6 hours (approx)

Start point

Small parking area at NY 605 014 on the minor road at Low Borrowdale, off the A685, 3.5 km south of Tebay

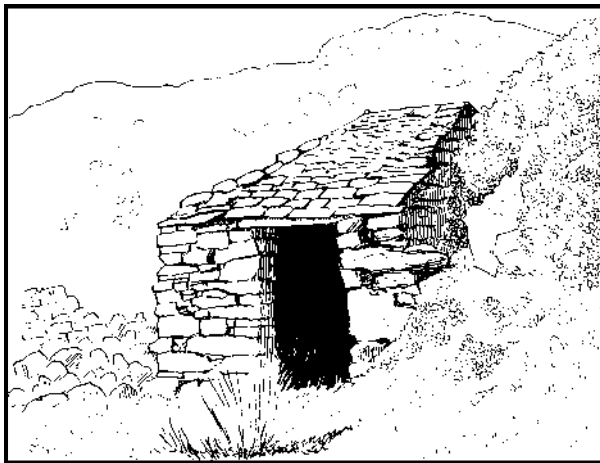
Public Transport

Low Borrowdale is served by bus routes 106 and 561 (limited service).



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Stone bothy on Mabbin Crag

An indulgence for the discerning fellwalker - visit a succession of six handsome little fell-tops whilst walking from the Lune Gorge to the A6, and back via tranquil Borrowdale, presently sequestered from two National Parks.

From the small car park, walk up the road from the gate through the native trees of Borrowdale. Coming to a low-parapet bridge over the beck, cross and immediately leave the tarmac bearing left on a rough track. Follow this bridleway, passing a tilted glaciated slab, to arrive at another gate.

This spot marks a point of decision.

From here one may go through the gate and follow the track winding up through the pines and mature evergreens to a wall-gate before continuing up the hill to arrive at the repeater station compound on the ridge-top, as the more direct approach for Whinell Beacon.

But should you have extra hour to hand, treasure the chance to visit the amazing scarp headland overlooking the Lune Gorge, focused upon the cairn on Grayrigg Pike.

To reach this efficiently from here, bear up beside the wall and, at your inclination slant half-left over rough ground, sparsely dotted with thorn scrub, to follow the ravine up to the point where it encounters the intake wall. Step over the netting at the eastern side of the pipe which spans the gill, being careful not to step into the water!

Now follow the wall left which swings from east to north and then east again, before curving uphill to a wall junction where go through a shepherd's passage at the corner, with a roll of netting acting as an impromptu hand-gate.

Turn smartly uphill keeping close order with the wall right, over Birk Knott. The view opens into the gorge with the M6 motorway and the Howgill Fells strikingly evident through the bowl of Little Cough. Keep close to the wall as it rises en route until a wicket-gate is found.



Looking towards Mabbin Crag and Ashstead Fell from Birk Knott

At this point take a spur route south-east on a definite path along the pool-decked ridge to visit the cairn on Grayrigg Pike - a fabulous spot to comprehend Carling Gill and the elegant outlines of Howgill Fells. A fine place to dally in the summer sun. After which backtrack to the wicket-gate.

Pass through the wicket-gate, and follow the pathless ridge to reach the stone-built OS column marking the summit of Grayrigg Common at 494m (1621ft). The extensive view will cause worthy delay. Gaze far and wide, from the high Pennines of Cross Fell to the north-east, the Howgills to the east, the far off Bowland Fells to the south and the riveting multi-faceted congestion of fells at the heart of Lakeland to the west. From here it seems this aspect of the view just must be better from Whinell Beacon, so you are inevitably tempted on.

Traces of a path sets course in a south-westerly direction, but don't be lured too far as the need is to keep to the main rounded ridge. Trending west, descend and slip through a depression to rise north-west on a path to come to a stone wall-stile in the vicinity of the tall mast. Pass to the left of the compound following the metalled access roadway leading to the lower telecommunications station compound.

This is the point of union with the shorter ascent mentioned earlier. Note the bench-mark on a bedrock where it joins. Follow the roadway

downhill, but leave it at the point where the matching snow-poles are lost on the right-hand side. Step off onto a grassy path curving round and along the undulating ridge to cross a stile in the wall, and continue with the quad-track declining to another track and cross the handsome ladder-stile.

Exit the pen and follow the quad-bike track climbing the fell left. To show that this is but the continuity of long pedestrian use find a further bench-mark on a solitary stone half-way up.

The summit was once far more substantially built up, the stones forming the base of a fire beacon from the 15th century. Some 30m down the south-western flank lingers a frail plantation, hinting to the site of a timber source for the beacon, while the fell-name is a reference to a former preponderance of gorse.

At 472m/1549ft this is indeed a fine and more generous view of the Lakeland fells, but now you will want to know how much better the next summit's view is, so head off over the fence-defended wall-stile and on down the fell-side NNW to the gate where a wall-side track is crossed. Keep the wall left on a somewhat damp track rising to a seemingly ever open gate.



A quad track follows the undulating ridge to Castle Fell

Hold company with the quad-track as this veers slightly away from the wall to take the natural line up the final steep bank onto the top of Castle Fell. A neat cairn forms an appropriate crown to this rock-ribbed crest. From the valley it lives up to its name, conveying the sense of a mock fortification.

Make your way back to the quad-track and come back into union with the wall, descending to a ladder-stile. A short distance further on and a light fence-stile gains entry into a comparatively young conifer plantation, clothing much of Mabbin Crag. If

you think you are following a watercourse then you ARE on the path which weaves its way through the firs. Coming onto a heather bank the path bears right to find a little treasure; a pent-roof stone shelter, in a storm this makes for an ideal mid-walk refreshment booth.

The ridge path leads on up the bank avoiding the trees to reach the summit cairn of Mabbin Crag at 482m/1581ft. All eyes trained westwards to the Lakeland's high fell array. The crag-name derived from 'Mabon', an ancient personal-name linked with native Celts. The ridge path leads off right, and on down a broad conifer-flanked corridor to step over a broken wall.



Summit cairn on Mabbin Crag

Ahead the ridge curves above Combs Hollow via three little tops of Ashstead Fell to arrive at the tidy cairn marking the prime viewpoint at 455m/1493ft. Having been audible assailed on Grayrigg Pike by the M6, the cacophony is here pegged back a few notches by the comparatively light traffic flow of the A6 seen below, having been relived of its primary north/south highway role in 1970.

The ridge path heads down the steep bank towards the brow of the A6, where once stood the famous green Leyland Clock, now happily restored to working order and standing at the Brewery Arts Centre in Kendal – it carries the legend “Leyland Motors for all time”.

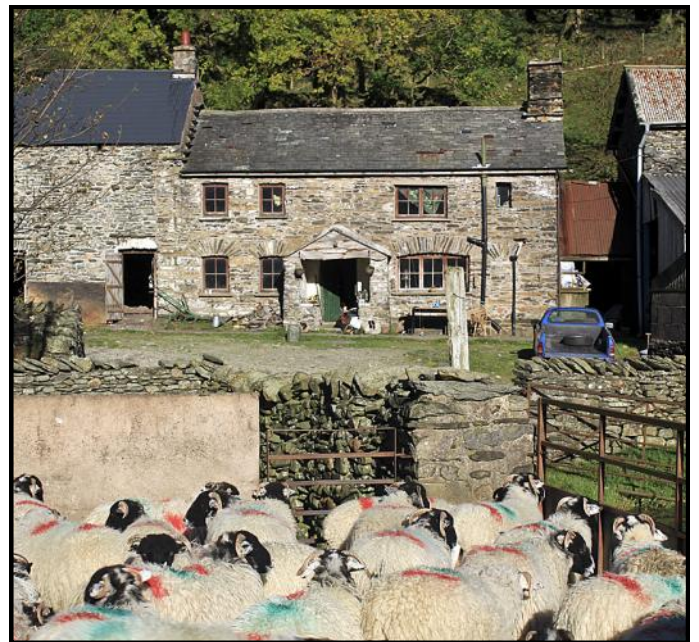
However, upon stepping onto the track by the gate to the main road, turn right. This track leads naturally into the valley, and one may visit the large stepping stones across the river, which give access to the Breasthigh Road: this forms the link path onto the Whinash Ridge, in its fullness crossing into Bretherdale.

The present walk follows Borrowdale Beck downstream, with the track crossing a gated bridge to swing right via gates. The green track traverses the valley pasture via further gates and passes by the buildings at High Borrowdale.

Throughout this section you will notice the steep slopes on the far bank have been planted up with deciduous trees. This is a major restoration project undertaken by the Friends of the Lake District who own this land and the farmstead, which was last inhabited some ten years prior to the construction of the M6.

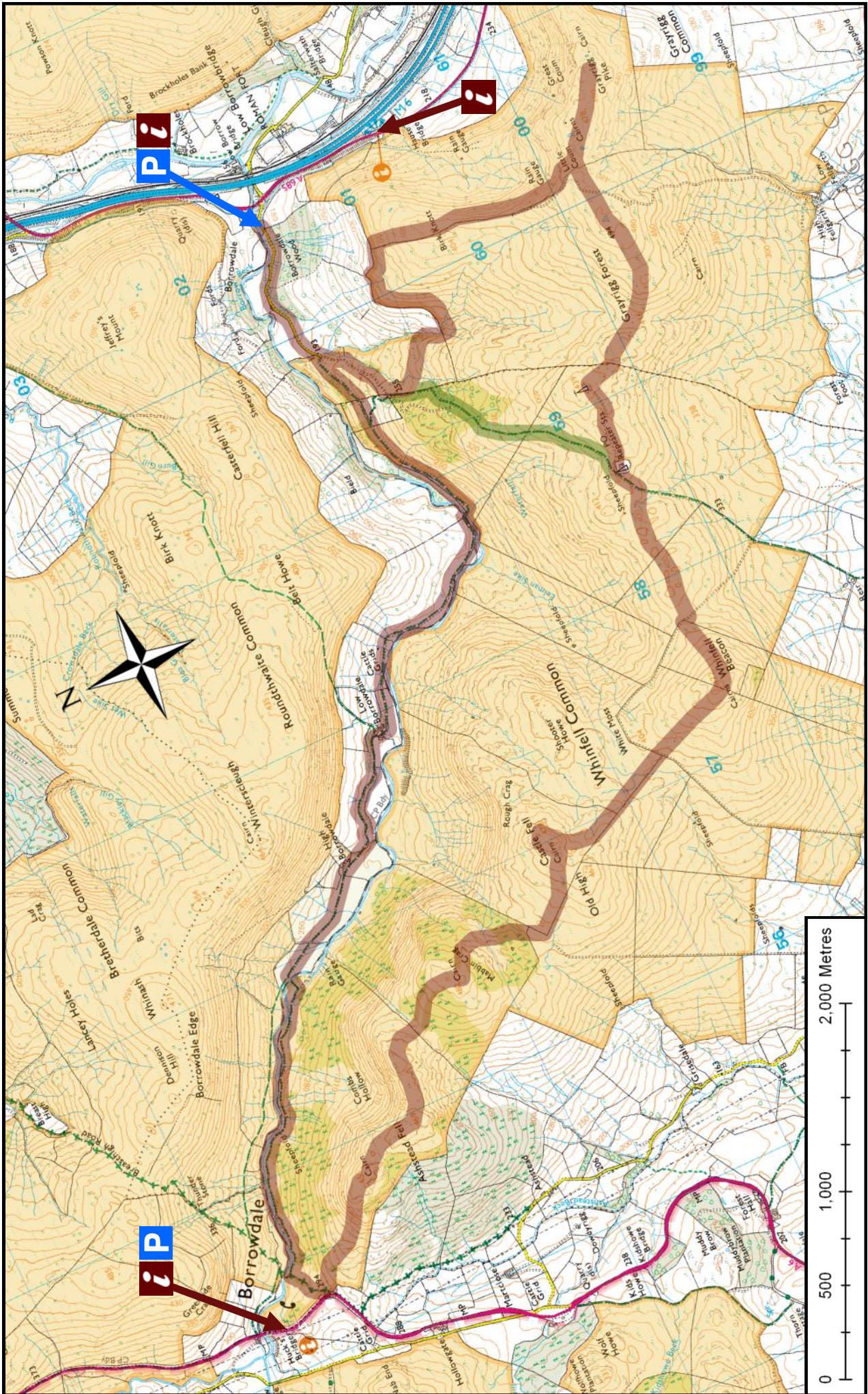
The green way leads on by a further gate and along a fenced bank to arrive at Low Borrowdale Farm.

As a reflection of changing times, the landowner recently moved to Tebay, with the traditional farmhouse (dated 1685 on the wooden board above the porch) now in the process of restoration by a new owner. However, the farmer still productively uses the farm buildings for his shepherding of the valley. The link with Tebay is an old one, a bridleway leaves from behind the farmstead crossing the Roundthwaite Common ridge.



Sheep in the pens at Low Borrowdale Farm

The walk keeps to the valley track via cattle-grids. The late autumn storms of 2009 jeopardising the track at one point. Cross the bridge, incorporating a sheep-handling pen. View the excited waters, downstream, where a deeper pool was once used as a sheep-wash. The track reverts to tarmac after a cattle-grid leading back to the car park... and the hectic world symbolised by the motorway.



Access Land



Line of Route



Access Information



Alternative Route



Parking Place