



Route Information

Distance 16.6 kilometres (10.3 miles)

Ascent 550 metres (1800 feet)

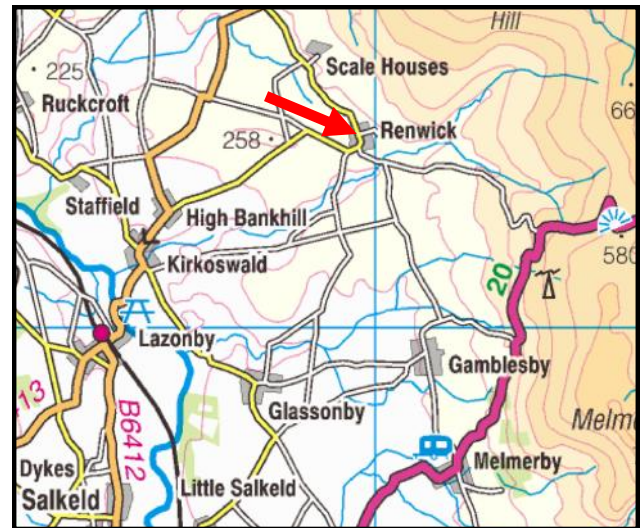
Time needed 6½ hours (approx)

Start point

From Townhead, at the northern end of Renwick village towards the parish church (NY 596 435). Roadside parking available near the church.

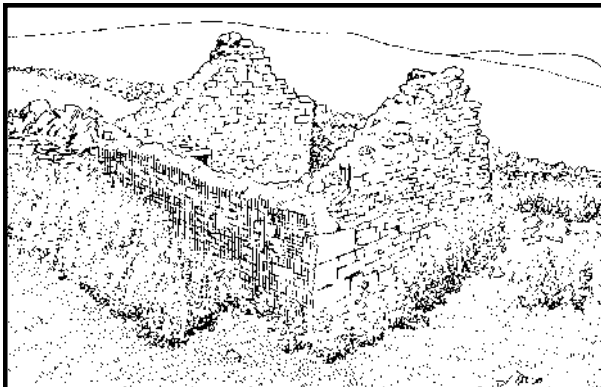
Public Transport

Renwick is served by bus routes 134 & 137 (limited service)



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Ruined bothy between Watch Hill and Black Fell

Climb into the realm of skylark, curlew, red grouse and golden plover. View the Lakeland Fells in long focus across the Eden vale, feel the solitude pure and simple. Take long strides on a ridge seldom trodden, where each year the path seems re-created, quite a contrast with path wear and tear in Lakeland.

From the village street follow the rising road signed 'Outhwaite' passing between the church and old reading room. At the top where the road swings right, continue forward into the farm lane (Open Access sign), passing up by a portal barn. Keep up

with the gravelly surfaced fell approach lane, pausing occasionally to look back, upon the rolling landscape towards the distant company of Lakeland Fells including the unforgettable saddleback of Blencathra. Keep straight on at the lane fork as the regular tractor traffic swing right. The fell lane arrives at a wooden field-gate after which a walled culvert spans the track draining a mire.

Climb on with the wall to your right, to a further gate entering Open Access land. Continue uphill on a grass trod with a fence close right. As the fence veers right, keep uphill on a diminishing path passing an obvious low-grade coal spoil-heap and the collapsed entrance to a colliery level. Watch out for the unusually deep sink hole to the side of the path. The path sets its sights on the steeping fell-side, but you will be amazed how quickly the 'energetic stuff' is completed at the brow. A faint path strides on through the waving grass to the ridge wall. The Ordnance Survey pillar quickly reached to the left, located where a climbing fence meets the wall. The tight barbed wire ensures walkers have no thought of crossing

over for descents via the enigmatic sounding Scarrowmanwick Fell, meaning 'the Irish monk's barn farm'.

Thack Moor, a sleek narrow grassy fell, carries the suggestion in its name of a former source of heather turves or divots for cottage roofing thatch. The corresponding Croglin Fell to the north, is still a heather-rich grouse moor. The two are separated by the long deep valley of Croglin Water reaching up to the peaty wastes at the Pennine watershed. The name Croglin meant 'the pool on a big bend'. The ridge-top of Thack Moor carries a substantial wall, the underlying rock evidently naturally fractures as an agreeable building material.

Follow the wall back SE and where it ends, apart from inspecting the sturdy sheepfold with lamb creep off to the left, keep forward across the open ridge to cross a fence stile. Continue along the wide ridge passing a small square boundary stone on a definite path, but keep up the rise of the ridge to reach the prominent crumbling currick on Graystone Edge.



Old Currick on Graystone Edge

The decrepit currick was originally erected to the memory of 'I Lowthian June 1863' to judge by the inscription on the sandstone block lying in the fallen pile.

Head on to Watch Hill, suggesting of former more wary times when strangers were doubted even on these wild places. Ensure that you are not distracted by the quad-path on the ground from missing the obvious ladder-stile. Cross the wall by this means, the spring-loaded hand-gate a feature. The continuing ridge ESE is bereft of a path of any form, the light herbage ensuring a speedy step. Find a second ladder-stile in the cross ridge wall,

and advance to the intriguing sheepfold ahead.

In the midst of the fold complex stand a roofless bothy, which gave the shepherd a wild-fell base when tending his flock in this remote situation at the head of the Raven Beck valley. I picked up a sheep's ear tag with the legend 'Outhwaite' on one side and 'Raine' on the reverse - the former being the farm-name, the latter the farmer's name. If you saw the television series 'Blood of the Vikings' you will have learnt that the strongest evidence of Viking ancestral DNA from the original settlement of Britain is to be found in the Penrith area. The family name Raine derives from the old Norse name 'Hrafn' and proves that, incredibly, this family have been rooted in this landscape approaching 1200 years, quite some reign of terra (sic)!

The beck-name Raven is a back-formation for Hrafn, the name persisting in the parish name Renwick, 'Hrafn wic'. Incidentally, the family who own Hartside Café, also within the parish, have the surname Renwick, a further instance of the stability in family ties.

Bear up left to join the wall, which after a gate becomes a fence in running through a marshy patch, before resuming to reach the junction with a broken wall. Go through the wall and bear up left with the stepped back ridge wall, patched with intermittent lengths of fence. As the summit plateau is neared eroded peat becomes evident, particularly on the far side of the fence. Exposed peat is extremely bad news in an age dedicated to carbon capture and neutrality to slow down the effects of ozone damage.



The summit OS trig point on Black Fell

The Ordnance Survey pillar is reached via a stile in the main ridge fence, and marks the summit of Black Fell lying on the spine of the Pennine chain.

Strictly the fell-name described the post-noon shadowed east side of the ridge, rather than the exposed peat, for all its latter-day evidence. Waters draining east flow into the South Tyne and ultimately into the North Sea.

The walk heads south with the ridge fence, in wet weather underfoot conditions favour web-footed walkers! The ridge fence kinks but the line of desire heads straight on to reconnect with the rising wall by the cluster of boulders on the southern crest of the Black Fell ridge, known as Little Daffenside. The wall-side path goes on south, down the initial bank, and keeps company with the wavering wall until a stile is crossed at the wall-end.

Stepping over a pair of immediate sink hollows the ensuing fence-side path takes evasive action looping right approaching the marshy fence T-junction, and heads on down to a kissing-gate after further sinks to reach Hartside Summit 1903ft.

Beyond the altitude sign stands Hartside Café in a generous car park, the pausing place of many a traveller. The situation is a welcome halt for refreshment of body and soul, a rare opportunity for non-fellwalkers to witness the actual, if not biblical, Eden from on high.



Bikers approaching Hartside Pass

Among the regular flow of traffic, a stream of bikers, the serpentine A686, running down the western slopes to Melmerby is one of their 'dream runs'. For too many it has the potential to rapidly decline into a nightmare as they misjudge the bends when fun-runs become over-excited mad-hat hell for leather races against some spurious clock. Hence the virtue of the rough fell option for cyclists, which is also the course of this walk, dipping from the main road at the car park entrance down the rough

lane blue sign 'off road 7'. This passes the Sustrans totem, the fossil motifs on the stem allied to the North Pennines Geopark.

Gingerly cross the main road at the foot of the slope and go through the facing gate slipping by the white-washed bothy. Follow the green trail down the fellside, coming down to the crossing of Ricker Gill. The old stone bridge has crumbled to a parlous state, hence the provision of a nifty pair of slatted by-pass bridges to the left. The green track heads on by a gate and enjoys lovely views across the valley to a limestone quarry with its lime-kiln prominent. Pass a roofless cottage with sheep handling pens, via a gate entering a fenced lane leading down to a minor road (with Sustrans routes 7 and 68 signs).

Go right crossing Selah Bridge, and at the top of the rise turn left down the green lane signed 'Five Lane Ends', the view ahead across the vale consistently lovely. The lane draws into the Swarthgill Beck valley, though the 'the dark ravine' is not evident from the lane. As the lane curves left, watch for the footpath waymark post and galvanised gate on the right. Enter the Kiln Beck valley pasture beneath a larch bank, at a wooden gate pass a pond, a quiet wildlife haven. A second gate gives access into the continuing meadow, cross the stone flags spanning the gill descending from the farming hamlet of Haresceugh. Haresceugh is pronounced 'Harscu' the name meant 'hare wood'.

At this point I met a young lad walking between farms, his surname was once again 'Raine'. I was engaged in a recreational walk very much of the modern age, while he was doing what his forebears had done for countless centuries and was sustaining the origins of the footpath itself!

Clamber through the nearby wall-stile and cross the next pasture on a long diagonal rising to a gate onto the road. Turn left, descend to cross Raven Bridge. Look for the two footpaths right, take the one signed 'Renwick', via the tight wicket kissing-gate. Keep to the right-side of the field to a gate under the wooded bank, then angle up the shelf track under the farm buildings to a gate, and join the farm access lane leading down into the village.

*Words and pictures © Mark Richards 2009
For a gallery of pictures to this walk visit www.markrichards.info*

