



Route Information

Distance 17.5 kilometres (11 miles)

Ascent 525 metres (1725 feet)

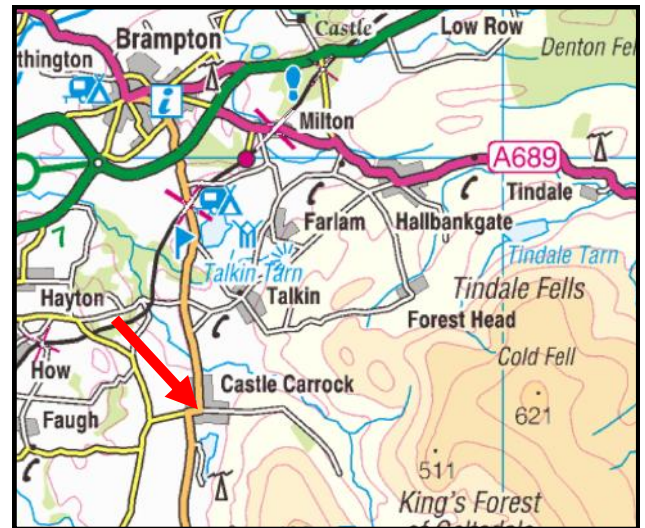
Time needed 6 hours (approx)

Start point

Castle Carrock village in the vicinity of The Weary Inn (NY 542 553). Roadside parking available nearby in the village.

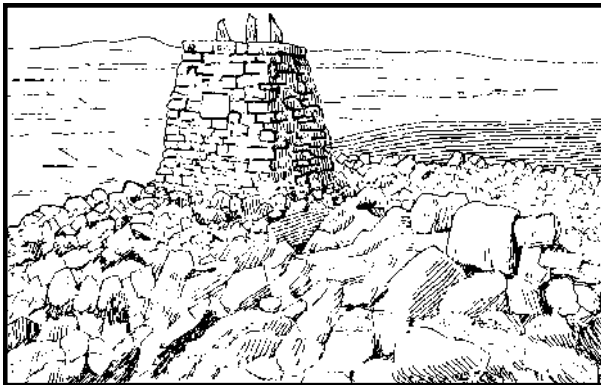
Public Transport

Castle Carrock is served by bus routes 94 & 97 (limited service)



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Part of this route crosses open access land on a managed grouse moor, over which **DOGS ARE NOT ALLOWED, UNLESS ON A PUBLIC RIGHT OF WAY.** This area is coloured red on the accompanying map. Access may be further restricted during the nesting season and at other times of the year. To avoid disappointment, please visit www.countrysideaccess.gov.uk to get the latest information, before you set out.



The Armstrong Cairn on Cardunneth Pike

From the right-angle bend on the main village street, bear off into Geltsdale Road passing The Weary and the Duke of Cumberland. One may walk on either side of the reservoir, though it remains well-screened by a high wall and trees much of the way.

The first option is to turn right immediately after the new housing estate of Sid's Field, where a footpath sign directs up a confined and frequently wet lane to join the back road to the tip of the reservoir enclosure. The better walk requires one to wander further up the street rising to a gate and sign right,

from where a quiet track leads onto the Tottergill access roadway and to the reservoir's end.

About 100m up the open concrete track left towards Tottergill (fox hill stream) one may spot a very old oak tree. Crippled, gnarled, with a massive girth there is no doubt it has been here for centuries and is one of the oldest of this species in Cumbria.

At the junction follow on up the road by the gate 'Roughet Hill' (rough clearing hill) swinging leftward, watch for the footpath sign right 'Brackenthwaite'. Roughet Hill farm stands further up the hill backed by a modern mast. Go through the gate and after 25m a second field-gate at the barn-end, with the hedge left, advance to a kissing-gate then to a gate in a wall. Traverse the ensuing field to a wall with waymark post guiding right to a gate entering the back yard at Brackenthwaite (bracken filled clearing).

Notice the vernacular barn to the right with lintel date-stone 1700 – clearly the collection of barns here represent at least three hundred years continuity of stock farming endeavour.

Pass the main farm entrance via a series of gates, striding on along the access road. At the right-hand downward bend branch off at the gate, signed 'Albyfield'. Rise up the pasture hollow to a gate, follow on down the next pasture to the barn access to Albyfield (cultivated ground belonging to the old - and now lost - Danish settlement evidently known as Aldby). Stride on through the open farmyard along the access road and, at a crossways, continue forward along the gated field-road, which marches attractively on into Cumrew (combe-head mountain path). The place-name presumably meant the ancient path to the significant Bronze Age tumulus on the scarp above, Cardunneth Pike – to be visited later in the walk.



The picturesque village of Cumrew

After the stately Cumrew House with its monkey puzzle tree, pass into the lane leading to the parish church of St Mary's, re-built in 1890. Once through the entrance gate pass to the right of the tower to find the wicket-gate at the far end of the churchyard. Descend the bank planted with young trees, via two galvanised kissing-gates and join a farm track to gain the valley road. Turn left, watchful of traffic, seeking a gate and bridleway sign left after some 500m.

This gateway can be wet, even in dry seasons. The reason will become evident as you walk alongside the rutted track to a gate beneath Foulisike Wood. The shallow stream running down the ensuing valley is periodically exposed to the cross-passage of trail-bikers' tyres, that divert the stream into the track ruts, and so down to the road.

Ford the gill, head on under the bank to a hand-gate at the foot of Bove Wood, alive with rabbits. Follow on by three further gates and a reedy pond to meet the lane at Newbiggin Townhead.

Should this point be reached at lunchtime then one may be tempted to divert right to visit The Bluebell, a lively little hostelry serving Thwaites cask ales and really tasty bar snacks.

Turn left, go through the gate (Open Access information sign) where a bridleway track climbs steadily, after two further gates enter Open Access land – part of the Croglin estate, a well-managed grouse moor. As the track levels, pass between two old lime kilns either side of the opening valley, confirmation of the underlying geology of carboniferous limestone. The near skyline, above the left-hand kiln quarry, is lined with shooting butts. Continue until the track starts to decline, take the left-hand forking track which winds gradually uphill past the shooting box onto the level fell-top. Note the tumulus on the brow left, not accorded monument status on maps, but to the untrained eye it has all the right characteristics.

The ridge-top track winds merrily on with several limestone sink hollows to the right. Go through two crossing walls to arrive at a wall junction gate. While the track naturally continues along the ridge it is more than worthwhile stepping left to visit the main scarp edge viewpoint of Cardunneth Pike. Bear left keeping tight company with the wall, periodically shooting butts have been integrated into the wall, and they look like window boxes! On reaching the scarp edge bear right, keep to the evident path to the tumulus mound.



Cardunneth Pike with the Solway in the distance

Surmounting the great heap of stones is a quaint family cairn re-built in 1961 by one Thomas Armstrong. This sense of a family mausoleum is consistent with the heritage of Cardunneth Pike. The hill-name derives from the earthworks of a Dark Age defended site above Cumrew called Dunwalloght Castle, and meant the pike of Dunwalloght, showing the same verbal contraction as Roughet. The mass of stones some 25m in diameter, though re-modelled in tiny part to create wind shelters in the last hundred years, is a Bronze Age burial site (circa 2000 BC). A crude Victorian excavation revealed several cremation urns. The view can take your breath away, forget your Helvellyn and Blencathras, stand here on a

suitable afternoon with the sun illuminating the immense vale and the far off Lakeland Fells with Cross Fell to the south and the Scottish hills in sharp outline to the north-west, you'll judge you are in heaven, especially with a setting sun glistening in the Solway Firth.

Continue along the edge path to meet the next rising wall. Turn right, follow this by some limestone sinks to reach the Ordnance Survey column beside the ridge-top gate. Go through and follow the quad-bike track along the ridge to an outward wall-corner. Keeping the wall to your right, cross the stile some 20m past the wall junction. Now continue along the ridge with the wall and fence to your left, on a single trod path, descend slightly towards Hespeck Raise (the second word means burial tumulus, the former is an unknown corruption). Although a stile is encountered at the dip, you are encouraged to make a brief detour to the prominent slender cairn on the easternmost rise of the knoll.



View towards Cold Fell from Hespeck Raise

This is a viewpoint par excellence for Geltsdale with Talkin Fell ahead and Cold Fell rising right above Tarnmonath Fell, right of this the wild valley of Old Water, further right still New Water. Carlisle City has long drawn supplies from the Gelt, a subterranean aqueduct running down to Castle Carrock Reservoir, constructed precisely one hundred years ago in 1909.

Geltsdale is an anciently settled valley. The river-name means 'magical or wild water' confirming this short river's habit of rising in rapid spate when charged by dale-head thunder storms. Until the 1930s The Gairs colliery was the scene of intensive coal mining, the Earl of Carlisle exploiting a high quality seam beneath Tarnmonath Fell. Reputedly, it was here that George Stephenson's famous locomotive 'The Rocket' ended its working life. The merging woodland of Knotts and Binney Banks is an ancient continuity, indeed the site of an Iron Age settlement has been discovered here. The great combe

gathering ground of Old Water is part of the RSPB's Geltsdale Reserve and is the haven of Hen Harrier; and the equally rare Black Grouse has a lek site in the cattle-grazed slopes under Talkin Fell. The delightful Red Squirrel has a perilous claw hold in the valley too.

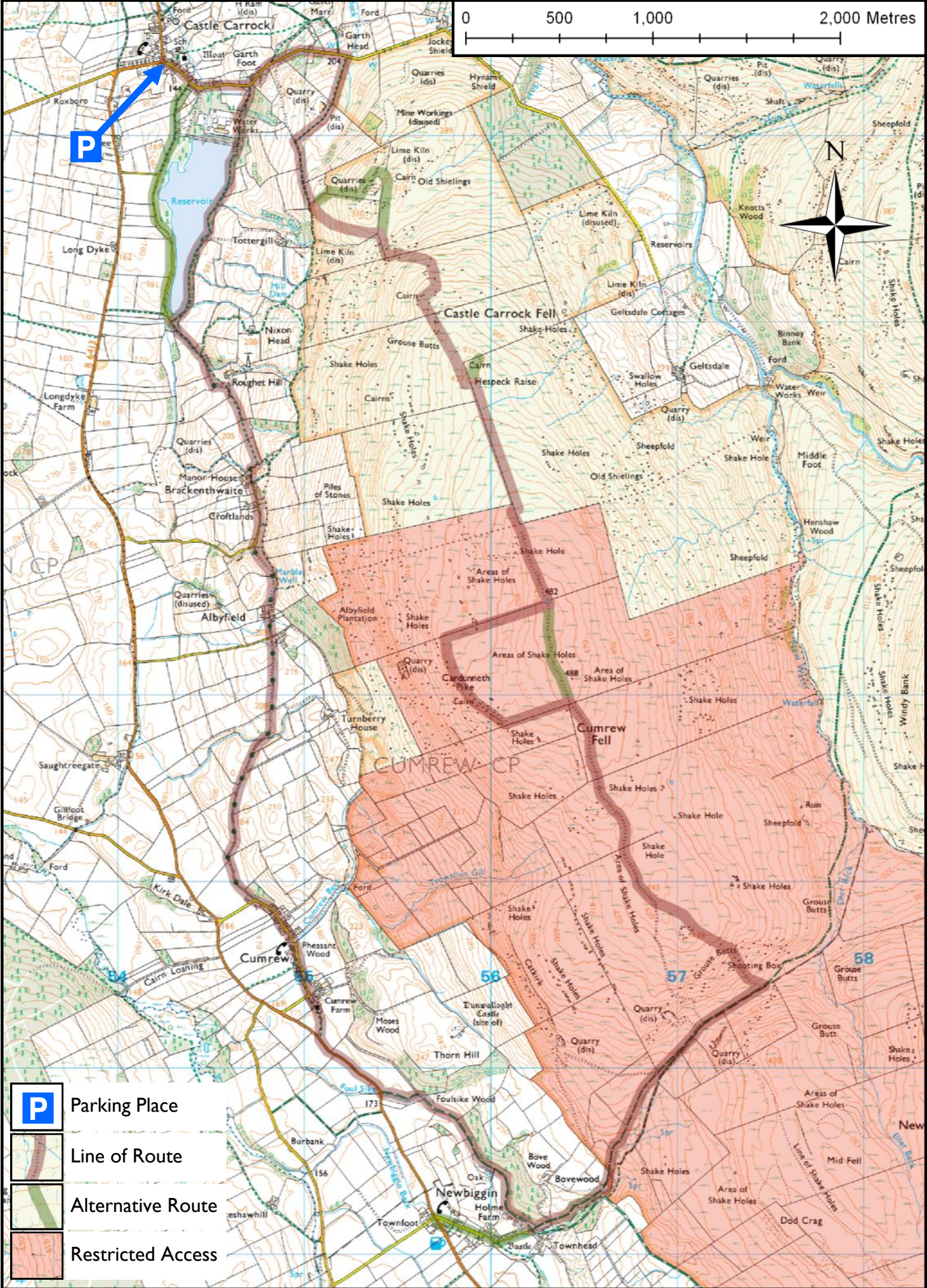
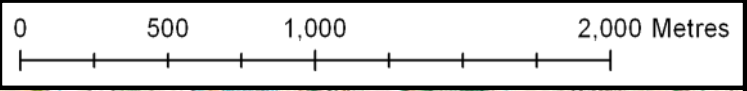
Backtrack to the stile and cross. In June the ground here is a waving mass of cotton grass. Follow the wall right, where this ends continue straight ahead pathless, passing a lonesome cairn to slip through the broken wall, descending to the large cairn on the lower brink. Bear right to the smaller cairn then drift down the slope bearing half-left over the brow into rank heather. Continue descending to a double stile: the broken wall defended by a stock fences on both sides. Descend to the gate in the depression below. One may go through and slant down through a gap in the wall to reach the green track at the Open Access entry gate (Open Access signboard).



For those geologically intrigued, why not consider continuing ahead up the slope to visit a most unusual limestone quarry. First visit the cairn on the little top through the heather, then step back to go through the wall gate and enter the old quarry enclosure, the stone extracted and burnt in lime kilns. Turn right and thread through the long retired quarry, you will see that the bedrock was subjected to considerable pressure, shown by the convex contortion. Angle back left over the brow to accompany the wall down to go through the second gate to unite with the shorter route at the Open Access sign.

Go through the gate advancing via another gate then stile, whereupon swing right by the wall. Cross a stile at the wall junction then follow the track down to another stile to reach the minor road opposite Garth Head Farm. Ahead notice the low sandy ridge, this is known as an esker, formed by the flow of rushing glacial melt water under an ice cap.

Turn left down the hill to re-enter Castle Carrock.

If you are looking for the actual castle suggested by the place-name then you will be disappointed, as there is only a vague outline of a moat in the pasture behind the church to mark the original defended site. The preponderance of Celtic names in the area suggest that 'Carrock' derives from the Welsh careg meaning 'the defended rock'.



-  Parking Place
-  Line of Route
-  Alternative Route
-  Restricted Access