



Route Information

Distance 20 kilometres (12.5 miles)

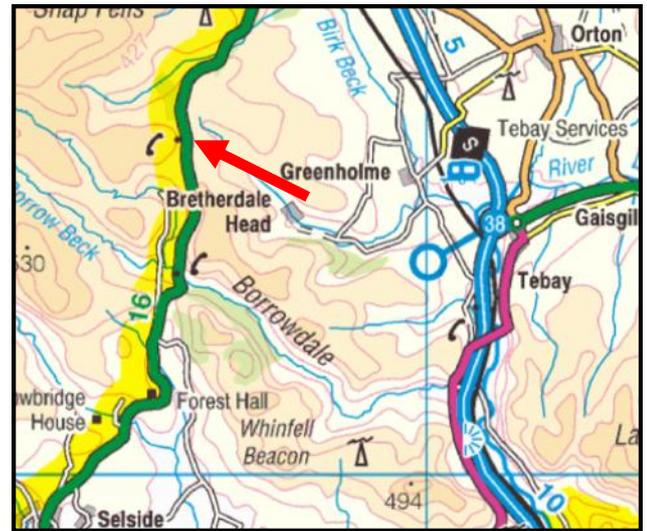
Ascent 700 metres (2300 feet)

Time needed 5½ hours (approx)

Start point

The A6 at NY 553 062, approx 6 miles south of Shap. Ample parking available in roadside lay-bys, on both sides of the A6

Public Transport. No public transport serves the start point. An alternative start point at Low Borrowdale is served by bus routes 106 and 561 (limited service).



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Ashstead Fell from the southern edge of Whinash

The peace and shy beauty of Westmorland Borrowdale endures for all, even with it being hemmed between two traffic corridors. Half-a-century ago there was talk of flooding the dale to create a reservoir, and more recently the Whinash Ridge became the focus of a possible wind farm development. Currently, there is a proposal to bring the dale and its flanking ridges within the Lake District National Park.

The two parallel ridges from Huck's Bridge on the A6 to Low Borrowbridge in the Lune Gorge provide uniformly superb fellwalking. Distinctly different in character, one may undertake a full-scale skyline round using the Breasthigh Road as a link or combine a valley stroll with one or

other of the horizon ridges. The Whinash Ridge is the uninhibited free-flowing option.

Though one may start from Low Borrowbridge, the walk seems to fit best when begun from the long lay-by at Shap Summit on the A6. A memorial stone reflects on the heritage of the tarmac highway, still well patronised by commercial traffic despite the great burden carried by the M6.

Walk along the verge due south to find a hand-gate/stile where a bridleway on the left is signposted for Bretherdale Head, which means 'the brothers' valley'. Pass through the heather enclosure to a further hand-gate and bear right. But watch not to be lured by the more obvious path (the actual bridleway) as it comes over the brow of the ambitiously named Red Crag, the crag a simple step in the ridge wall.

The Open Access Walk moves in harmony with the gently ascending ridge wall with little hint of a path. Wander through the damp depression before climbing onto Crookdale Crag 457m/1500ft, the top-knot is over to the left, bereft of a cairn.



Looking westwards from Crookdale Crag

This fell-top overlooks the lower bend of Crookdale, hence 'the crooked valley' from where it flows south to join Borrow Beck.

Continue with the wall onto another minor top and then come by a fence-stile and fold. As the ridge wall ends head forward to step down over the Breasthigh Road - an open byway frequently used by 4x4 vehicles. The ridge path leads on along the continuing broad fell-top climbing easily onto to round top of Whinash 'the ash-tree pasture'.

Footings for stability cables and a metal switch box remain as a reminder of the anemometer mast, which stood here in the recent past taking wind velocity measurements in advance of 27 wind turbines, each the height of Blackpool Tower, proposed for this exposed hilltop. In the face of a tidal wave of local and national opposition the proposals were dropped.

A quad-track defines the ridge path, which clings neither to the strict spine nor drifts too close to Borrowdale Edge as the ridge turns south-east, with attention constantly drawn to the forest-froked Ashstead Fell and conifer-crowned Mabbin Crag across Borrowdale.



Across Borrowdale to Mabbin Crag from Winterscleugh

The grass track sweeps on to arrive atop the cairned summit of Winterscleugh, the summit-name means 'the ravine associated with the family of Edward Winter', recorded from C17th as land-holders in Borrowdale.

A small outcrop on the southern brink catches attention, as too the long view west beyond the head of Borrowdale with the Kentmere fells and Ill Bell in particular drawing the eye, with Great Gable to its left and further left Crinkle Crag and further south still the Coniston Fells.

The quad-track lures you on, though you will be rewarded should you concede to the temptation of visiting the southern brink of Roundthwaite Common, peering abruptly down upon the beech-screened Low Borrowdale Farm in the valley below. The ridge dips further crossing imperceptibly the line of a bridleway from the farm to Roundthwaite slipping to the left of Belt Howe. The hamlet-name Roundthwaite translates as 'the clearing of the mountain-ash'.

Keep faith to the quad-track as it crosses Casterfell Hill and leads through a further dip in the ridge before climbing quickly onto Jeffery's Mount to visit its modest cairn, with its view down upon the busy traffic corridor of Tebay backed by the Orton Fells.



The Howgill Fells across the Lune Gorge from Casterfell Hill

The plateau is the summer home of a large herd of fell ponies, many disposed to exchange pleasantries with transitory walkers.

The quad-track now turns northwards, bound for Roundthwaite, whilst the walk turns south-east. As the ground begins to fall away by a small hillock, trend right finding a consistent trod through the bracken. The easiest going is actually found to the

south-west, aiming for the intake wall, where a strong trod inevitably exists running down south-east with the wall. This duly joins a farm track curving with the wall north-east to a gate, which quickly meets the A685 - a busy road if not as outrageously calamitous as the adjacent M6.

Turning right, keep to the verge for approx 500 metres, and take the minor road into Borrowdale on the right. Follow this road past the car park and on through the gate to wend through Borrowdale Wood via the valley road. After a cattle-grid this becomes an open track, which leads over a bridge and on upstream, via more cattle-grids to pass through the yard at Low Borrowdale Farm.



The valley track leading to Low Borrowdale Farm

From the gate beyond the farmhouse, a lane leads on along a shelf above the meadow and via gates to pass High Borrowdale Farm. This property is owned by the Friends of the Lake District, hence the recent deciduous plantings on the banks hereon. The bridleway, now at dale-floor level, advances via a gate to the next river-crossing bridge.

Two options present themselves. Cross the bridge and follow the level track to keep beside the river, and as the track forks, cross the river via the large stepping stones to a gate joining the Breasthigh Road, leading directly out of the valley.



Stepping stones crossing Borrow Beck

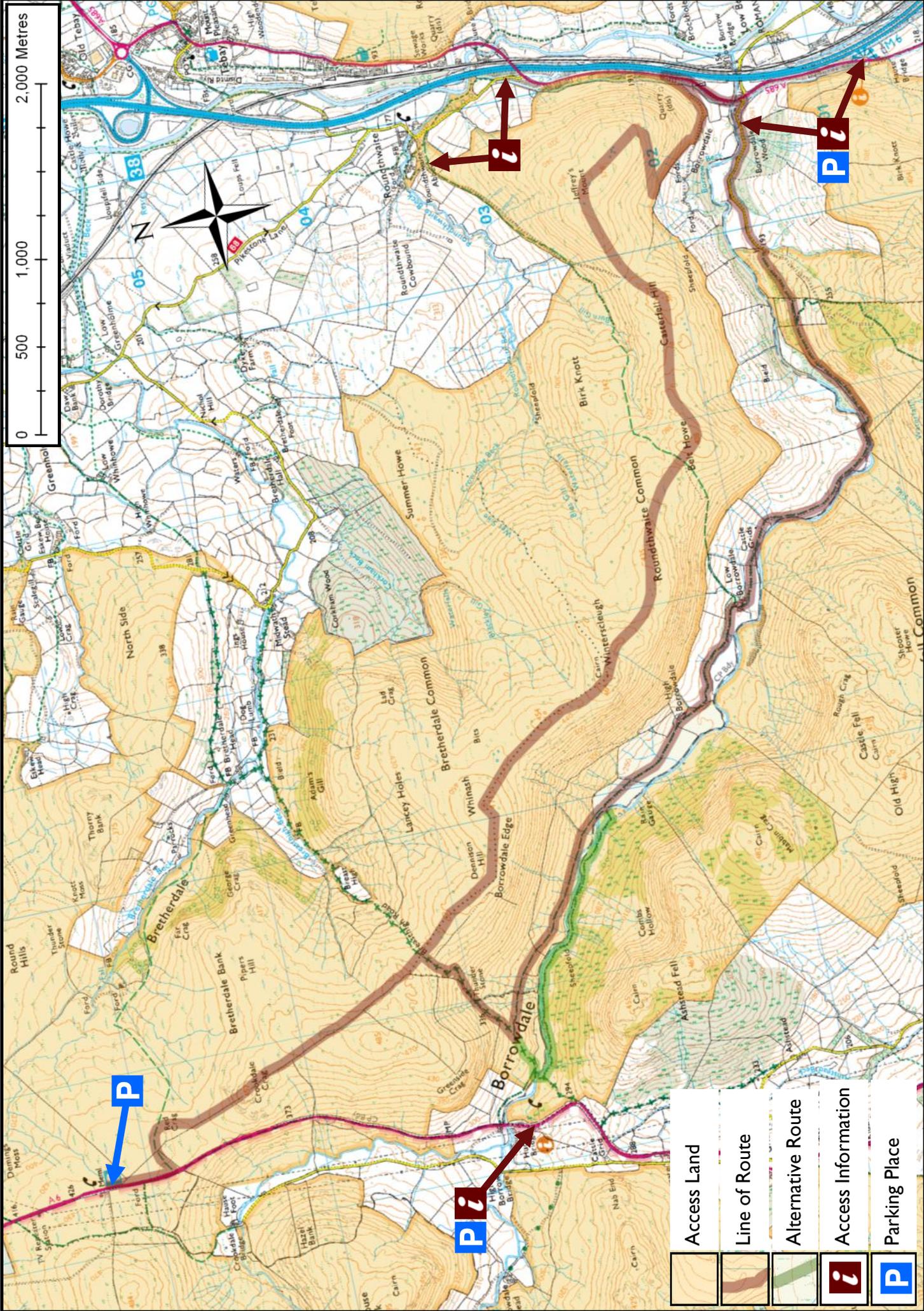
Alternatively, opt to stay with the near-bank bridleway. Admittedly this is a rougher option underfoot following the less accommodating banks on a tangible but narrow trod. Firstly through a tall gate entering a deer-excluded enclosure, protecting the banks where sections have been planted up with deciduous trees in an endeavour to restore the traditional tree cover.

Coming above the broad beck with some evidence of wash-out in the gills, the path climbs a little and contours to a tall hand-gate to exit the FLD land. The path moves onwards along the bracken slope to meet the Breasthigh Road.

Turn uphill with this open track, passing through a gate, notice the large erratic boulder of pink Shap granite immediately beyond, this holds the intriguing name of 'Thunder Stone' and is one of several such stones carrying this name in the area - what was the significance of this striking name?

The track continues showing unfortunately deep rutting, the combined effect of modern 4x4 vehicles and heavy storm washout. Winding uphill, re-connect with the outward leg of the walk on the ridge-top. Turn left and retrace your opening strides beside the wall, perhaps with not quite so much skip in your step!

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2,000 Metres
1,000
500
0



-  Access Land
-  Line of Route
-  Alternative Route
-  Access Information
-  Parking Place