



Route Information

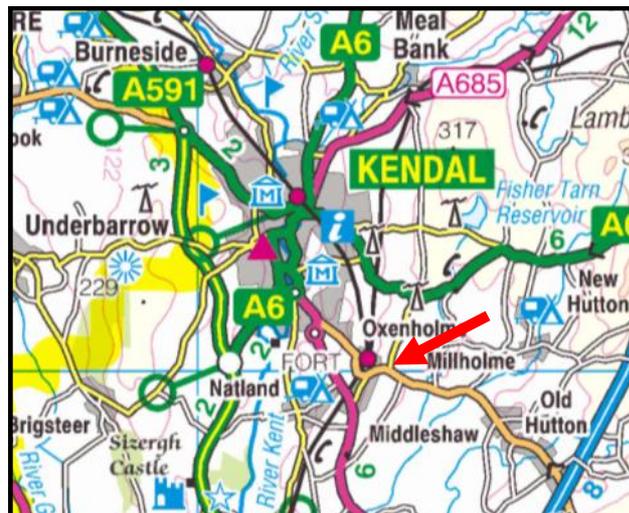
Distance 3.8 kilometres (2.5 miles)

Ascent 140 metres (470 feet)

Time needed 2 hours (approx)

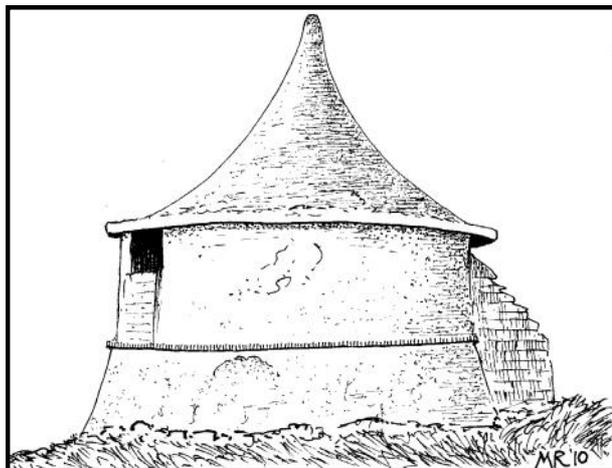
Start point: Lay-by along on minor road a few yards north of the Station Inn, off the B6254, Sedbergh Road (SD 535 900).

Public Transport. Oxenholme Railway Station, 500m (0.3 mile) from the start point of this route, is served by bus routes 41 and 564 (limited service)



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High Wells Gazebo

The auld grey town of Kendal, handsomely straddling the River Kent, is blessed with a near surround of much-loved hills and scenic scarps.

The Helm is one such landmark hill, situated to the south-east of the town directly above Oxenholme station. It's been long appreciated by town's people as a place of leisured exercise and peaceful contemplation. The instant you wander along this little ridge-top you know precisely why it is so treasured.

The whole hill is called The Helm, perhaps derived from its likeness to a helmet, particularly apparent when viewed on southern approaches (A65 from

Endmoor), while the summit with its Iron Age defences is known as Castlesteads.

Approximately two-thirds of the hill is Open Access land. The western slope is open space, with commoner's grazing rights, and locals have long enjoyed conditional recreational liberty. With the acquisition of the east slope above Helmside Farm, by the Friends of the Lake District (FLD) a few years ago, the whole hill has gained the same degree of public access. The Friends' land is not formally designated Open Access, but in the spirit of their foundation, and under their care and management, similar measured liberty has been extended.

From the Station Inn cross the road and take the narrow lane opposite. An Open Access signboard beside the cattle-grid at the northern tip of the access land, allows you to judge the geography of the little hill as you embark.

Stepping up off the open road, which runs along the western foot of the hill to meet the A65, and follow the clear rising path heading due south climbing 200ft to the first brow, a good spot to gauge your situation looking towards Benson Knott.

Come alongside the ridge wall and keep it company with Castlesteads' ramparts a striking feature ahead.

The outward views are consistently superb, giving every good cause to pause from time to time to look down on Kendal and judge its favoured location, amid a great surround of tantalising fells. The view is made all the more exciting to the south-west where the silver strand of the River Kent at Arnside draws the eye towards the expanse of Morecambe Bay. While to the north-west looking over the ribbon housing of Oxenholme, running along the foot of the hill, and by the further expansion estates you gaze towards the heart of the town, with the Kentmere fells beyond.



Southwards along the ridge towards Castlesteads

On the higher ground a fence replaces the wall. Pursue the ridge rising through the shallow rampart banks onto the summit, marked by an old Ordnance Survey column: a moment of rich reward.

This high point (185m/607ft) found purpose as a natural retreat in times of heightened threat for the local Celtic clan over two millennia ago. The twin ramparts of their hill-fort girdle the top, though there can have been only room for a handful of temporary huts. Present-day transitory visitors appreciate the high spot for its captivating 360-degree view.

Prominent landmarks are Farleton Fell to the SE, Morecambe Bay SW, and over Scout Scar the serried ranks of Lakeland Fells NW. You'll notice that there are no hill-fort ramparts on the west side, the steep slope was sufficient, making this more of a promontory fort.

Continuing south, the gradient smartly changes as the path angles down by the rocky ground. Notice the recent wall restoration works, part of an on-going programme of craft skills courses run by the FLD.

Coming down through the jumbo growth of gorse, keep to the more obvious path, which curves right and coming closer to a wall switches back left to meet a bridleway.

Your attention may be caught by a curious goblin's gazebo, lurking on the far side of the wall. Standing at the top of High Wells land, built, one suspects, as an exclusive viewing station facing the Arnside estuary.

The path leads south through a gate. Coming to a crossing of a minor road turn left by the part-fixed metal gate, with attendant Open Access signboard. The path splits at once, but keep uphill through the lighter gorse, bracken, and tree growth to climb the steep southern slope of the hill to regain the summit, separated from the OS pillar by the ridge fence. The rarely grazed eastern side of the summit fence contrasts markedly to the tightly nibbled turf on the west side.

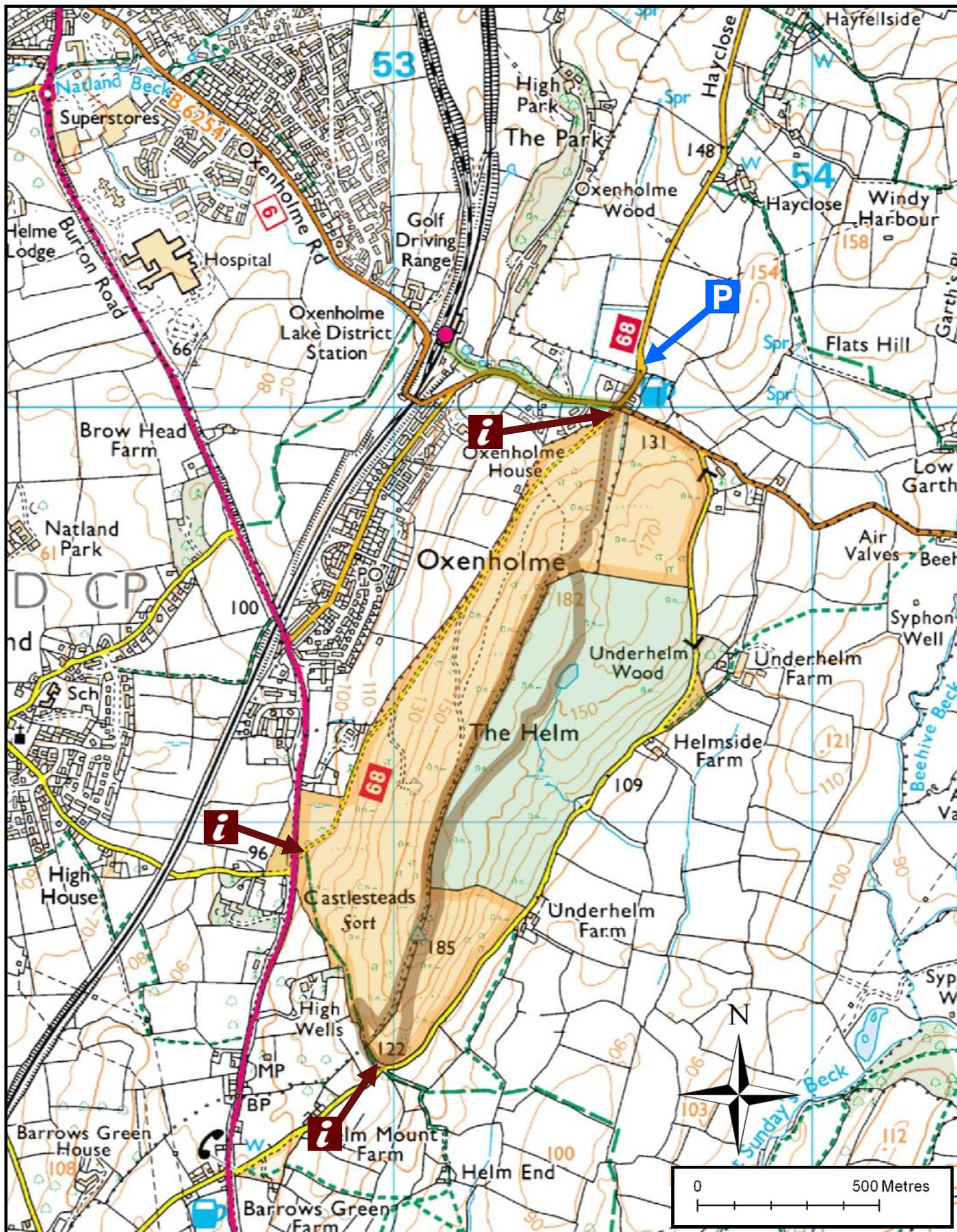
Continue forward, passing through the ramparts and down to a gate. The character of this next allotment is inevitably different to that of the west side as a result of different grazing patterns and the difference caused by its aspect, catching only the cooler morning sun. With the ridge wall close left, walk on until you come by the first kissing-gate, whereupon drift half-right contouring on what is little more than a sheep trod by a small outcrop. Crossing the base of a downward orientated wall come over a shelf between young gorse to reach a small tarn. Constructed as a modest fishing amenity by the farmer, the pool is now a haven for wildlife.



Retrospective view from the small pond

Continue naturally curving up leftwards to meet the wall again at the second kissing-gate. Notice the sheep creep to the left, this low 'hole' was originally built into the wall to give lambs access to additional grazing on the common.

Go through the kissing-gate and re-trace the path you ascended at outset of the walk. The place-name Oxenholme meant 'the raised meadow where draught plough-oxen were kept'.



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|--|--------------------|---|------------------|---|--------------------------|
|  | Parking Place |  | Line of Route |  | Permissive Access Land |
|  | Access Information |  | Open Access Land |  | Route from Train Station |

Panorama from Castlesteads Iron Age hill fort (The Helm)

