



Route Information

Distance 7 kilometres (4.4 miles)

Ascent 280 metres (920 feet)

Time needed 2½ hours (approx)

Start point

From Castle Carrock, follow the Geltsdale Road up the hill to reach the bend in the road at Jockey Shield (NY 558 556), where some verge parking is available..

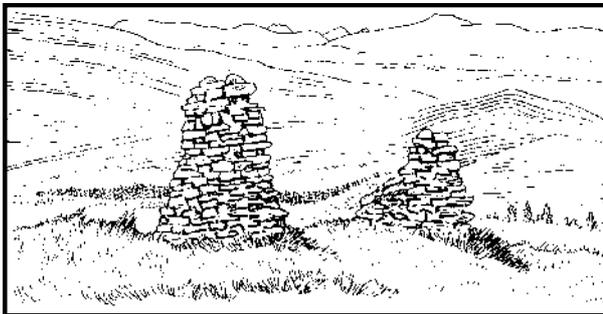
Public Transport

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



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The distant Lakeland Fells from the top of Talkin Fell

In context with the general pattern of the walks in this series this is modest, but given good visibility delivers a real sense of being part of the moorland world for those with a limited time at their disposal. The view from Talkin Fell is a real talking point!

From Jockey Shield follow the track downhill, passing the Open Access information panel. Cross Hynam Bridge, peer over the parapets to view the River Gelt, whatever the conditions a beautiful sight as it rushes excitedly through the bed-rock gorge.

Turn left and follow the access track to the entrance of Low Hynam, whereupon bear right up through the gate into Hynam Wood.

This old track is known locally as the Monk's Trod, suggesting a connection with Lanercost Priory. The cartulary (estate record) of the original foundation certainly makes mention of Castle Carrock and Geltsdale. There is even one comical reference to a hen called 'Brun' inserted as a cartoon into the margin of the document. Intriguingly the surname Brown is still a prominent one in the village, hen pecked or not! Hynam Wood is predominately birch coppice, with new deciduous plantings in the clearings. On the lower craggy banks, largely unseen, mature oak survive, hinting to a former greater presence in this wood.

Arriving at the gate co-incident with Holme Gill, pass through and turn right within the lane. This lane, a category five road, starts from Talkin Head and is accessible from Talkin village (where find the popular Blacksmith's Arms). A further Open Access signboard is sited at the first bend.

At the next bend the valley view opens and sustains a lovely prospect for the duration of the between-walls climb. Initially one can see both Blencathra and Skiddaw to the right of Castle Carrock Fell.



Upper Geltsdale from the track above Holme Gill

The fields to the right, frequently the grazing ground of cattle is the common lekking ground of Black Grouse, a rare moorland species in England.

The track opens at a gate betraying a change in the underlying geology. Over to the right the broken edge of a limestone quarry can be seen, the track undulates passing sink hollows, where surface water percolates into the bedrock, giving a further clue to the presence of limestone strata.

After arriving at a gate the green-way forks, keep ahead with the wall to your left, on a lovely turf trail. As the wall bears left leave the more obvious track, destined for rushes and the low saddle ahead. Veer up left beside the wall climbing towards the upper slopes of Talkin Fell. Cross a low fence at the top of the steep bank, keep the wall close left, walking through the young spartan heather, where the wall steps left follow suit on an evident path to cross the ladder-stile beside a sheep creep. Venture onto the summit of Talkin Fell, marked by an Ordnance Survey column.

The humps and hollows of wall-stone quarrying have proved a fertile gathering ground for casual cairn-builders over the years, hence the grand parade of tall curricks line the western brink. A dozen cairns of varying proportions stand proud; there is even a new one set some distance down the right-hand scarp bank. Like Tarnmonath, the curious fell-name Talkin is Welsh, and meant 'the top of the gabled brow', the word 'talcen' exists in modern Welsh.

At 381m/1250ft Talkin Fell is no mountain, but the hill top view is sumptuous. Ranging from the Helvellyn chain, Scafell Pike, Great Gable, Blencathra and Skiddaw round to Criffel and the distant hills of Galloway, then on round by the Manor Hills above Moffatt, Tinnis Hill above Langholm, Coldcleugh Head above Hermitage, Christianbury Crags above Bewcastle, The Cheviots and the Whin Sill scarp of Hadrian's Wall from Winshields, Hotbank and Sewingshields Crags. Tindale Tarn is the sheet of water below the Cold Fell scarp due east.

Backtrack over the ladder-stile and at the wall corner take the left-hand forking path down through the part-burnt heather declining into the hollow. Pass the first gate and reach the second galvanised gate, defended by a marshy patch. Go through the gate and switch immediately up left beside the fence slipping through a shallow weakness on the low outcropping. Bear right onto the growing edge, with several small quarried bays evident. At the highest point one has a real sense of being on a gritstone edge, the kind of feature one may know from the eastern edges of the Peak District.



Looking across the Solway Firth from the top of Talkin Fell

Where an area of burnt heather occurs one may branch left to reach the summit cairn of Simmerson Hill, with a ridge path running south, or simply stay with the edge declining on a broad grassy shelf to where a fence intervenes. Follow the quad-bike track down beside the fence, spot a circular sheepfold down to the right, with a mature rowan tree growing within.

On reaching the level green track at a gate, go right along the open green-way. Pass the solitary casual cairn to reach the track junction beside the wall.

You may find it interesting to divert a matter of 30m up right to spot the hare smoot at the base of the wall, these were built as a means of trapping hares. A further, more exaggerated departure from the track can be contemplated left, with the evident quad-bike track at right-angles. Follow this on a spur route to inspect the



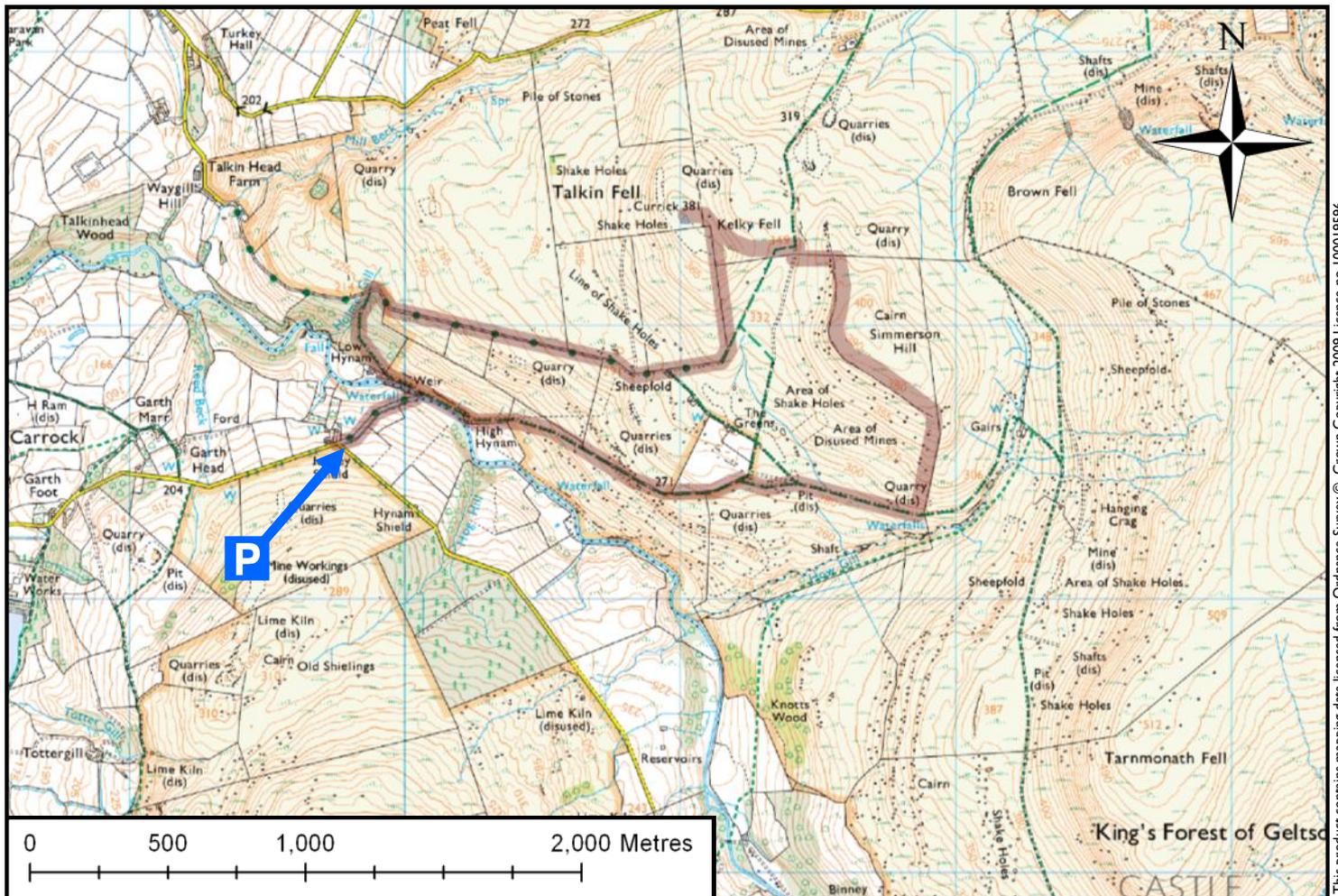
'Hare smoot' built into a drystone wall

seldom seen and unrecorded settlement site on a shelf over the brow. The quad track veers left after 300m and you need to find an old path veering right leading down through the bracken to the settlement site, dotted with a few thorn bushes. There are some ten oblong house platforms (8m x 4m) defined by large stones, with a vertical stone palisade on the south side. These can become lost in the bracken, so are best seen in winter.

Backtracking, continue with the wall-side green track to the kissing-gate - this may be removed autumn 2009, with the change of stocking in the valley, the flock of sheep being replaced by traditional herd of suckler cattle. The track pitches down the steep incline and passes High Hynam (currently undergoing re-development) coming beside the river to reach Hynam Bridge. From here it just a short walk up the track to the start point

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For a gallery of pictures to this walk visit: www.markrichards.info



P Parking Place

 Line of Route