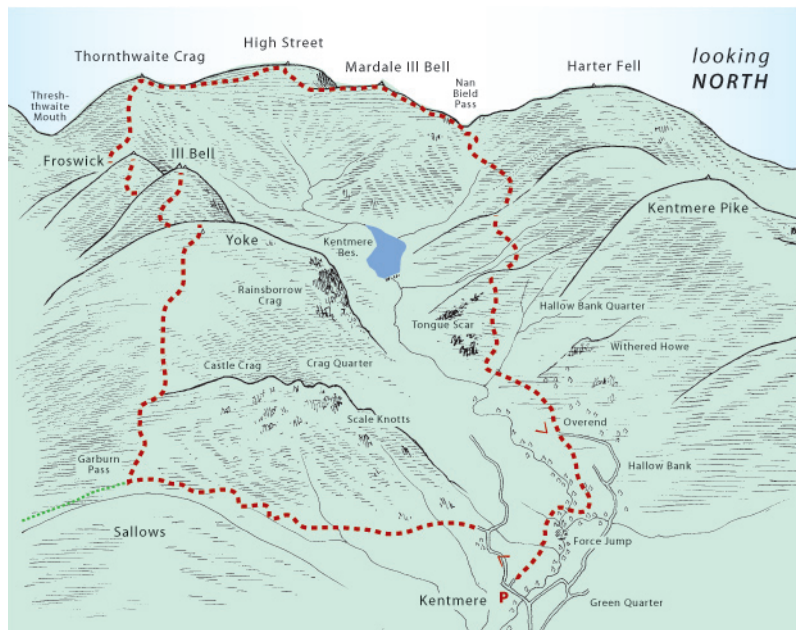


PARK & STRIDE

with Mark Richards
on BBC Radio Cumbria

15 High Street from Kentmere



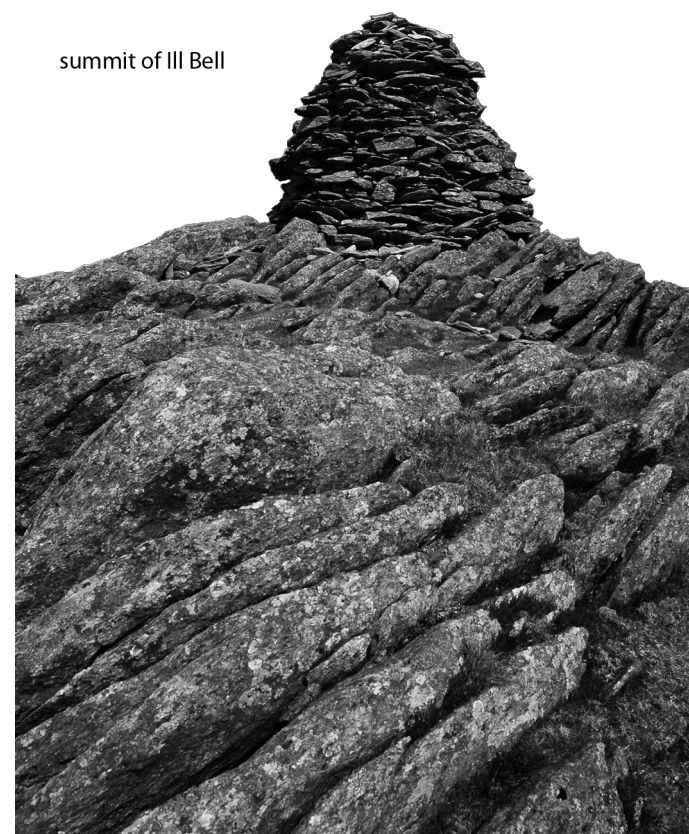
distance : 19km/12 miles *time* : allow 8 hours
ascent : 995m/3,265ft *grade* : strenuous

PARK beyond St Cuthbert's Church beside Kentmere Institute (£1 in courtesy box) GR455042. Space is very limited demanding an earlier than normal start. In high summer and for a maximum of 28 days a paddock beside the road bridge below the church is brought into commission by the landowner (parking fee). Otherwise roadside parking in the vicinity of the village is non-existent, there is some scope in a lay-by after the road gate north of Green Quarter, close to the start of the Stile End bridle-track GR 464051. In summer the best option is to hop a'board the Kentmere Rambler, this bus is gifted for this purpose – cultivating sustainable transport and car-uncluttered lanes, the valley needs a year-round post bus shuttle .

WALK SUMMARY: Climbing via Garburn Pass the route becomes special once the summit of Yoke is underfoot. Thereafter a succession of handsome fells Ill Bell, Froswick and Thornthwaite Crag lead onto the Roman Road and the top of High Street. Switching south and east onto Mardale Ill Bell pitching off the high ground, down the zig-zags from Nan Bield Pass. While strong walkers may choose to undertake the full skyline horseshoe via Harter Fell, Kentmere Pike and Shipman Knotts, our route does more justice to the scenic delights of the upper Kentmere valley tracking downdale, gaining new perspectives on the Ill Bell range, and the green strath leading back to the village.

ROUTE: Follow the road continuing from the Institute keeping left when confronted by a gate. Passing The Grove turn right at the fork, signed 'Troutbeck via Garburn Pass'. The rough track leads by a newly installed gate (thankfully denying access to 4x4 traffic) and along a walled section above the massive Brock Stone (Badger Rock) with it's sprig o'heather. Look beyond to the pele tower at Kentmere Hall Farm to the narrow Kentmere Tarn, tautological 'tarn' and 'mere' both mean small lake. Passing through a further gate continue on an open track winding up the trail, gravel becoming a pitched track to the Garburn Pass gate.

Pass through and step onto the marshy ridge right accompanying the wall. The drier and more orthodox path branches right further west, where the adjacent wall turns left. By either means the less than exciting ascent progresses up to a ladder stile bound for the bare gently domed summit of Yoke at 706m/2,316ft. Each of the three summits Yoke, Ill Bell and Froswick have lower by-pass paths on the west side, symptomatic of the hasty passage of fell racers. Pass a solitary cairn at the brow leading on the summit cairn, resting upon a small outcrop. Within the last six months the clear ridge path has been given a thorough make over, inverting the substrate to create a firm, durable causewayed path through the eroded peat hags. The path descends, peer right, over the brink into the barren Rainsborrow Cove with old slate quarries at its foot. Climb steadily from the depression to the characterful peaked summit of Ill Bell at 757m/2,484ft, the cluster of cairns and ribbed-slate outcropping hugely distinctive. Take time out to revel in the memorable situation. The stony path heads north-west down to



summit of Ill Bell

the next depression climbing again to Froswick's far less impressive cairn. A moments pause, then descend to the next depression above Over Cove climbing now upon the Roman Road, hoof-prints and bike treadmarks mingling with vibram treads. The 14-foot beacon (see below) built into a wall corner on Thornthwaite Fell at 784m/2,572ft, the inevitable lure.



Thornthwaite Beacon

Leave the beacon right, following the ridge path which curves left around the head of the Hayeswater Gill valley. Striding through an old wall, choose harmony with ridge-top wall rather than the Roman Road. Pass a ruined fold to reach the OS pillar marking the top of High Street at 828m/2,717ft, not the most propitious of viewpoints. Leave the fading white-washed pillar south beside the wall though after 250 yards veer half-left, keep mindful that the broken edge of Bleawater Crag looms along the eastern edge of the grassy plateau. A path leads onto the tapering ridge of Mardale Ill Bell, gaining handsome views down upon the elliptical Blea Water and it's backing crag, buttressing High Street.

The fell summit, marked by a small cairn of no visual merit. At 761m/2,497ft, the view is largely limited to the dependency fells of Haweswater and Kentmere. The ridge path draws tighter, winding down south-eastwards to Nan Bield Pass. The pass-name described the elaborate walled cove 'Anne's bothy'. The trans-ridge path was a regular way in centuries past, humble travellers finding

temporary shelter here and in a cluster of four tiny wall bowers parallel with the shores of Small Water.

Turn right, embarking on the intense sequence of zig-zags dropping south from the pass. Recent drainage work will minimise path slippage. Kentmere Reservoir holds attention down to the right, created in 1848 to supply a head of water for the bobbin mills in Staveley. Above it, and below it, Romano-British settlement sites have been identified. The Reservoir Cottage belongs to Blackburn Education Authority and is used for outdoor pursuits. Imagine a young Alfred Wainwright eighty-five years ago being introduced to Lakeland in such a facility, only when he moved to Kendal and began his magnus opus did he get the chance to venture into the higher recesses of the River Kent. The river is renown as a haven for freshwater pearl mussels and native crayfish, the main reason for its designation as a Site of Special Scientific Interest.

Traversing the slopes of Kentmere Pike the path crosses by Smallthwaite Knott: watch out for the bedrock inscribed 'WK 1879' and 'T Kitching 1877' one wonders who these people were idling long enough to immortalise their visit. Winding down pass an old slate waymarker 'TO MARDALE' off the modern line of the path, indicating an old fork in the way north, to a long defunct slate quarry in one of the headstreams of Ullstone Gill. There is further more extensive slate quarrying on the west slope of Tongue Scar, with two big metal-barred levels. The path from Mardale descends to a footbridge and continues above the valley bottom wall as a green way, via several gates, to Overend.

The metalled road may appeal, but given even moderately dry conditions the best route is unquestionably the bridleway that goes through the gates adjacent to the renovated Little Overend. This runs on to cross a bridge into Low Lane. Shortly after passing through a gate, a footpath crosses the line of the walled lane. Climb over the right-hand wall stile descending to cross the footbridge spanning the juvenile River Kent, some distance above the embowered and very private waterfall Force Jump. Advance to the squeeze stile into a walled lane. Go left, noting the litter of huge boulders that must have bugged farmers down the ages, in the pasture to the right. Go through a gate at Rook Howe following the lane naturally down to the church.

It is interesting to slip through the churchyard, note the graves of Henry and Edith Marshall (Henry was the generous printer who subsidised Alfred Wainwright's first guide the 'The Eastern Fells') their son Roger's empty grave lies adjacent, he died climbing on Everest, his body was never found. The family lived at Low Bridge, in the 'lost' Wray Quarter of Kentmere, OS mapping shows the other three Quarters, but omits this one.

After-walk refreshment

Call in at Mags Howe in Green Quarter where Chris Heavey will merrily provide teas for thirsty, hungry walkers. Open at weekends in winter and every afternoon in the summer. For pubs, retreat to Staveley with the Eagle & Child, Duke William and The Railway.

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