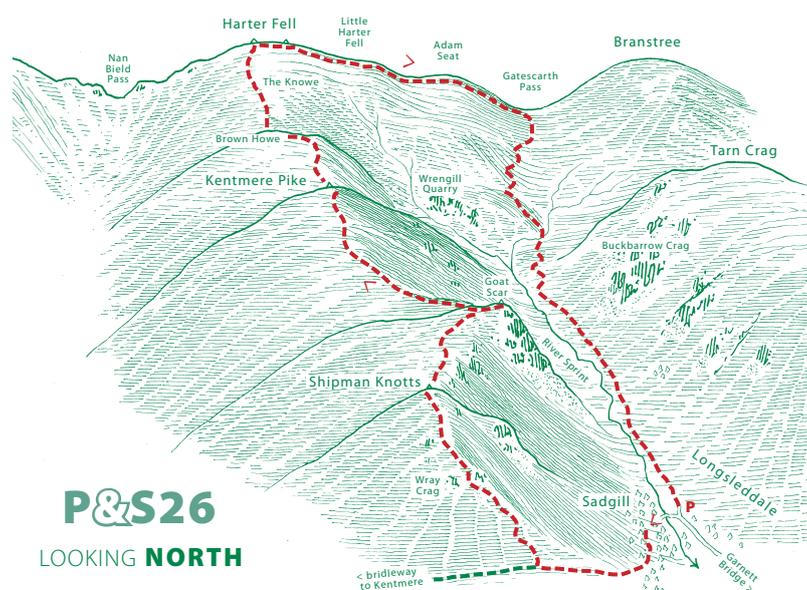


PARK & STRIDE

with Mark Richards
on BBC Radio Cumbria

26 Harter Fell from Sadgill, Longsleddale



distance : 13.25 km/8¼ miles
ascent : 640m/2100ft

time : 6 hours
grade : energetic

MAPS (Harvey Superwalker) East Lakeland
(Ordnance Survey) OL5 North-eastern area

PARK

At the Longsleddale road-end beside Sadgill Bridge there is scope for some dozen cars, GR 483057, but in this exquisitely confined valley-head setting they are inevitably intrusive, however tidily parked.

Witness the transition from Pennine to Lakeland

Locked away in the furthest fold of the Far Eastern Fells Longsleddale embodies all the intrinsic magic of Lakeland and marks its beginning and end. This walk climbs off the Stile End pass onto the rocky spine of Shipman Knotts, visiting the crest of Goat Scar en route to Kentmere Pike to culminate on Harter Fell, with its commanding view over Haweswater. Running easily down to Gatescarth Pass, it follows the ancient drove-way, later quarry track, down into the impressively wild upper quarter of Longsleddale. The valley-name is geographically expressive, though actually derives from the traditional 'sled' (pony-drawn sledge) used to haul peat for winter fuel from the fell-top mires, and

had a longer frame than commonly found elsewhere in the district. Walkers might consider experiencing the valley's greater beauty by starting two miles back from Sadgill where there is a car park set adjacent to the church and community hall (external toilets and interpretative board).

The Route

Cross the sturdy Sadgill Bridge following the bridle-way left, signposted 'Kentmere'. Pass up through the gates by Low Sadgill Farm, at the next gate the lane opens rising on bedrock. Immediately after the second (fifth all told) gate leave the level track right. Crossing marshy ground, rise in harmony with the wall, climbing over bedrock steps to the brow. Cross a further marshy patch to rise again close by the wall on a loose stony bed to gain the summit of Shipman Knotts 587m/1926ft. Strictly the summit lies over the adjacent wall, but there is no provision for casual access; solice, the view is best on the west.

The ridge path dips and rises to a tall ladder-stile. Cross and keep right beside the new fence. At the 'V' corner cross the small stile and venture to the cairn on the crest of Goat Scar. Wander a little down the east slope to gain the best of all views of Longsleddale, down-dale, into the craggy fastness at its head, spying the age-old drove lane, the cascading River Sprint (origin of name 'the leaping one') and across to Tarn Crag fell buttressed by Buckbarrow Crag.

Backtrack to the stile and keep right beside the fence, the fence becomes a wall on the easy climb to the top of Kentmere Pike 730m/2395ft. Again the summit is o'er the wall, but here there is provision for anyone to venture to the east side, location of the stone-built Ordnance Survey pillar (original reason for slate wall stile). But again the best views lie on the west side and the outcropping gives scope for a picnic perch, thereby revelling in the lovely view west to the Ill Bell range and beyond into the mountain heart of Lakeland.

The ridge path continues unhindered on grass, skipping the several eroded peaty areas. The wall giving way to a fence shortly

after the first depression, the fence the surest of guides to the plateaued top of Harter Fell at 778m/2553ft. The summit cairn is unmistakable, if a trifle odd in composition, the usual gathering of stones laced with sprigs of metal fencing stakes, plucked from the discarded relic of the forerunning fence. The panorama is amazing as one might expect, distanced from the main Lakeland heights, the Ill Bell and High Street ridges holds the main attention. Stride onto the western edge to get the best views down on Small Water. To the east the long views feature the Cross Fell range, the highest Pennines, the Howgills and Ingleborough.

Continuing with the fence the next cairn above Harter Crag provides a peach of a view over Mardale Head and Haweswater. The lake-name deriving from the two high north/south passes (hawes), Nan Bield (Ann's shelter) and Gatescarth (goats' enclosure). The fence continues beside the path until at Little Harter Fell it breaks right they come together only as the newly structured path meets the ancient bridleway at Gatescarth Pass.

Turn right through the gate following the open-tracked Mardale Byway which duly descends, via

a zig-zags, passing the largely hidden old Wrengill Quarry to a padlocked gate (access for off-roading 4x4s is strictly and rightly controlled). Cross the stile beside at a sheepfold from where the track continues via a further gate now becoming a sturdy pitched way, originally set to cope with quarry traffic. Passing down beneath Buckbarrow Crag (left) to wind along the attractive walled lane viewing Goat Scar rising abruptly on the west side of the level strath. The walk ends effectively where native trees shelter the farming hamlet of Sadgill, derived from the Norse meaning 'streamside hiding-place' - a place of joy not dispondence.

After-walk refreshment

The most convenient pubs require a retreat to Staveley where find the Eagle & Child, Duke William and The Railway with Wilf's Cafe in the Millyard a specially recommended eating rendezvous. While at Selside find The Plough Inn. In upper Kentmere call in at Mags Howe in Green Quarter where fell-walkers teas are available, open at weekends in winter and every afternoon in the summer.

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Goat Scar in upper Longsleddale