

PARK&STRIDE

with Mark Richards
on BBC Radio Cumbria

40 Keldas from Glenridding

Three miles — three hours

NATURE OF THE WALK: Firm reliable paths and tracks all the way, and one 530 foot ascent.

PARK At the National Park pay & display car park in the village of Glenridding, situated 12 miles from Penrith along the A592.

This last Monday I took a gap in the storm to visit Glenridding, austensively to complete the last leg of the 108 StagePath - I had been promising myself the trip for a long time. Easter 2010 Stagecoach Bus Co. will be releasing the completed (free) leaflet guide, covering the whole walk from Penrith to Patterdale bus stop to bus stop for 24 very scenic miles. This being a sequel to the hugely popular 555 StagePath.

This last linear stage also serves as the basis of a three-mile diamond landscape walk that is quite the rounded scenic indulgence. Fell-sage Wainwright claimed that the Jaws of Borrowdale was the most scenic square mile in England, well, centred upon Keldas this locality runs it a close second! This is what I might call a 'Slow Walk' not just in terms of pace and progression, but in the quality of all the ingredients that make for a lovely sensory three-hour stroll.

The walk features a wonderful little fell-top viewpoint (Keldas), a secretive tarn (Lanty's) and views into two mighty mountain glens (Glenridding and Grisedale), all about the head of one of Lakeland's most adored lakes (Ullswater), with sumptuous tea-room and pub fayre to complete the 'without haste' taste adventure, which just might fill you with euphoric glee!

Harbouring in the village-name Glenridding (glinn rhedyn) 'valley beset with bracken' - and beset still - yet at this time of year the golden bracken, together with the translucent yellow and russets of birch and beech leaves make a stunning symphony of colour. It has been a mild autumn no hint of a frost. Yet with further storms brewing, those first frosts cannot be far off at which point the most tenacious leaves will lose their grip and fall like stones to leave the trees winter bare once more. So take every opportunity to get out in your locality - yet these glorious colours

are nowhere better seen than from Keldas looking down the upper reach of Ullswater - a soothing scene in any season.

The WALK

Begin from the National Park pay & display car park in the middle of Glenridding. The Park Authority's 'Ullswater Information Centre' makes an interesting port of call right at the start. The tipped ore wagon a poignant reminder of the origins of the village we see today. The Greenside Lead Mine situated up the valley beneath Sheffield Pike ran for well over 150 years, closing for good in 1960. The mine shaped the village of today, though the force of water racing down Glenridding Beck has had a say in the past too, when thunder brought massive rainfall to the heights of Helvellyn!

Glenridding Beck's bed of blue-grey stones and clean water attract attention, but the fact that there is space for so large a car park in the middle of the village is testimony to the dangers of having such a great mountain catchment and the effect of thunder storm swells that have torn down beck-side dwellings in past times. Hence also the great delta below the road where stands The Inn by the Lake and Glenridding Pier, the promontory created from sediment carried down by the beck at turbid torrents of stone, an endless chain of events.

Retrace how you drove into the car park by the Information Centre. Bear right over Glenridding Beck and turn right by Sharman's shop following the lane past Glenridding Public Hall, currently staging a local craft fair. The lane leads on through Eagle Farm. The farm-name a memory of a tie when the Golden Eagle was either still prevalent in the skies or then recently lost, due to the persecution of farmers protecting their Herdwick lambs. The Mardale eagles no longer breed, though their return was headline news, when last I was in that valley a solitary male was wheeling the sky forlornly waiting for a female from Galloway to venture by. Notice the lovely ferns growing on the wall opposite the vernacular white-washed farmhouse.

The track soon forks, bear left, away from the beck, coming through the environs of Croft House, with its productive vegetable garden. The path forks again, this time two paths to the same end, the left-hand option showing deference to the privacy of the house. The paths come together and rise up a flight of pitched steps to a kissing-gate then continue up a bank, which in late Spring is an amazing carpet of bluebells - until the bracken grows to ultimately steal the sunlight.

The path switches left when it is confronted by a kissing-gate at a wall climbing a little further to cross

the brow and approach a grove. Before you do make a point of slipping through the gate ahead (with its Patterdale Hall signboard). This sets one on course up the pine-landscaped bank to reach the very top of Keldas. The hill-name meant 'spring house', might this have been a significant abode associated with a holy or healing well? Forerunner of St Patrick's Well situated at the base of the hill, mindful that the old valley road came over the hill at this point. The view is worth the very modest effort, featuring the upper reach of Ullswater, frequently alive with colourful yachts, and overlooked by great fell slopes.

Backtrack through the hand-gate and now go through the gate left into the grove surrounding Lanty's Tarn. The name derives from the nickname of Lancelot Marshall from Patterdale Hall, the dam was constructed as part of his Victorian development of the estate. The setting is romantic and at this time of year the colourful leaves of the surrounding trees beautifully reflect in the invariably still waters, sheltered from the breeze. The track opens and provides a magnificent outlook into Grisedale. Ahead Birks and the mighty slope of St Sunday Crag and at the dale-head the craggy ridges of Dollywaggon and Nethermost Pikes, southern sentinels of Helvellyn with their wild hanging valley 'cove's - a mountain-fest for the eyes. St Sunday Crag has frequently been called the Ullswater fell because of the way it dominates views up the lake. It no less dominates the view from within the valley too.

The track bears down by a low fingerpost and where the track next forks veer left to the gate at the foot of the descending wall. Turn left, down the pasture to a gate onto the fenced roadway. The private road left leads to the hunt kennels of the Patterdale Foxhounds. Continue down to cross the Grisedale Beck bridge. Grisedale meant 'the valley where swine ran loose'.

Coming to the junction one may go left to the main road, but the finer option is to turn right by the gate and along the open road. This valley road, part of the Coast to Coast Walk, is popular with walkers who wish to explore the hinterland of the range from within this long deep valley. Watch for the footpath fingerpost within a few paces on the left, this guides by a gate and on through the yard of a derelict bank-barn. This classic specimen is in dire need of a purpose and some urgent TLC, for it is a fine piece of vernacular workmanship. The path mounts the bank ahead, but gill washout has caused severe damage which explains why, just at this moment, there is a collection of black bags filled with helicopter dropped boulders, awaiting the attentions of path-fixers to restore the immediate setting.

Go through the wall gate at the top entering the confines of a three-compartment sheepfold. The path is guided left by the wall and - after a path joins from the left - as a track the footpath contours round the base of Glenamara (frequently abbreviated as Glemara) Park, stepping stones support the fording of Hag Beck. The term hag referred to 'the place where trees were cut'. This 'park' was in fact not just a place of woodland but, defined by a high wall, was the smallest of a series of five late medieval red deer compounds along the western shore of Ullswater. The track slips through the park's extraordinarily high wall at a gate and then runs down by a rock rib to a kissing-gate into the birch grove of Mill Moss. Keep left and come round by the back of Patterdale Hotel to reach the road. Opposite is the pay & display car park and 108 service bus turning point. In effect you are standing at the southern end of the 108 StagePath.

Park & Stride 40 now in effect follows the roadside footway back to Glenridding. There is plenty to see for all the notional disturbance traffic may bring. Pass on by the village school - hence sign pointing to its 'Cyber Centre' - to visit St Patrick's church, the saddleback roof a charming feature complimenting the backdrop fellscape of Grisedale. After the Grisedale turn, pass the half-timbered mountain rescue base, built as a result of generous bequest from an anonymous lady. Patterdale Hall is obscured by a mature arboretum. The present house was largely a 1800 rebuild by the self-styled 'kings of Patterdale' the Mounsey's; the estate was sold to the Marshall family from Leeds in 1824 but is now run as an outdoor pursuits centre.

The path weaves through roadside trees and as a boathouse at the southern tip of Ullswater draws close, cross the road onto a raised walk, leading above St Patrick's Well. A pedestrian crossing leads back over where go through the metal hand-gate at the entrance to St Patrick's boat hire and café. Keep left along the open footpath to ascend steps and go through the hand-gate stepping onto a roadway. To the right is the Glenridding Pier, while the walk turns left to join the initially pathless main road back into the village to finish.

After-walk refreshment

There are several tearooms in Glenridding, the best are Fellbites located opposite the National Park information centre in the main car park and Greystones Coffee House on the lane leading to the public hall. There are several pubs of which The Travellers Rest up Greenside road and Inn on the Lake best merit attention. In Patterdale find the White Lion and Patterdale Hotel.