

Fairy Steps from Beetham

Beetham is just South of Milnthorpe on the A6. The walk starts from the car park of the Heron Corn Mill. If you are driving North up the A6, then look for the Beetham Hall Crematorium on the left as a landmark, then take the second on the left which is Leighton Beck Lane - don't be distracted by the first on the left which is signposted for the Heron Theatre. From Leighton Beck Lane, take a right to follow a single track lane down the side of the river and up to the car park. Heading south is perhaps easier – look for the Pelta papermill on your right and turn right into Leighton Beck Lane at the end of the works – then proceed as per the directions above. If you are using satnav to find the carpark, then the address for the Heron Corn Mill is **Mill Ln, Milnthorpe LA7 7PQ**, whilst the appropriate what-3-words tag is **exist.dialects.shadow**. If you prefer paper maps, then the grid reference is SD49567994.

From the car park, we head back down Mill Lane toward the A6, and when we arrive at Leighton Beck Lane, turn right and walk up the lane, past the war memorial and into the village, where we turn right onto Church Street, just before the Wheatsheaf pub. We continue down Church Lane looking for a Public Footpath finger post on the left just after the last house in the village. This takes us across a field and then uphill to enter the woodland that covers Beetham Fell.

We enter the woodland and follow the path round to the right. This rises, and approaches a derelict building, which we pass with the ruins on our left, before our path veers left and crosses a broad track. We ignore that track and carry on – our direction should be South-bound at this point. Almost immediately our path meets another at a T-junction, where we head right, and uphill. A path merges from the right – we ignore this and press on along a clear path heading southwest for a while until we arrive at a wider track – used by forestry vehicles. From here we continue in the same direction as before, heading consistently southwest and climbing toward the plateau at the top of Beetham Fell, where we find the Fairy Steps. The steps are in fact a natural feature within a broad limestone scar called Whin Scar. Note that the steps are very narrow, and when wet can be slippery – so an alternate permissive path has been provided to bring you safely down to the base of the steps. The GPX shows this safer route.

We now carry on along the base of the scar, heading north for a while until we come across a way marker post with an unusual stainless steel top indicating two routes to Cockshot Lane. We take the one on the right and the path now heads down to a drystone wall where we turn sharp left and follow the wall along limestone pavement until we arrive at a minor road. We turn right at the road and follow it for a very short distance until we see a way marker post on the left offering two routes. One is signed “Storth” – we ignore this and take the second simply signed as “Public Footpath”.

Our path now heads North through woodland – the path remains clear, veering to the right, and then back to the left – all clearly signed. We then head uphill, heading north through Haverbrack woods, where wild deer may well be seen. Over to our left, and at times no more than 100m away is an enormous quarry. It is not visible from the path, but a glance at the fly through on the website shows it clearly.

The path eventually arrives at a curious building – a water storage tank built in 1926, and we skirt round it to the right where the path catches us out by leaving the woodland behind and opening up a fantastic view across the Kent estuary toward Levens and the Lakeland fells. We can also see Milnthorpe over to our right and Heversham Head – where BFG have also walked.

The views are great here and the climbing is now done, so this is perhaps a good place to take a break.

Fully refreshed, we head down the hill hugging the drystone wall to find a stile and gate at the bottom of the hill where we access a minor road. We cross the road, and our path continues on the other side along a clear path right at the edge of the woodland which soon heads left and then down hill to a drystone wall where we head sharp left following the wall along a path that can be somewhat muddy.

We cross a couple of stiles at a farm access lane and continue with the path until we arrive at the B5282 which runs along the edge of Milnthorpe Sands. Here we cross the road and take the signposted path along what was once a railway line, heading toward Heversham. We soon find a gate on our left where the path leaves the track bed and heads down to the side of the estuary, and we continue North-east not far from the water's edge, until progress is blocked by the muddy banks of the River Bela. We deal with this by turning right and following the Bela round, past a weir and up to a fine stone bridge.

At this point, we meet the B5282 again, and we cross directly over and take the lane up toward Dallam Tower. The road continues on and we walk with it, leaving the river Bela – although it stays visible for a while.

Over to our left is the Deer park – hence the high fence, and an unusually tall kissing gate which we take on the left to enter the park. We strike out to the East for a while and then veer right to pick up a path which heads south – essentially we are following the line of the Bela back to the start now, even if the river is not always visible.

We climb for a while and notice what at first appears to be nothing more than a derelict barn over to our left. This was in fact the “buck house” a shelter for the deer herd, which was destroyed by a fire in April 2021.

We crest the hill and head down a line of trees to a gate which gives access to the Heron Mill car park – and our walk is complete.

- **Total distance 9.2 km (5.7 miles)**
- **Total ascent 309 m**
- **Easy walk**