

Rather Heath & Burneside

We start at a layby just off the A591 on a section of road that since the new bypass was built has become a pleasant backwater and a great place to park to start a walk. To find it, take the A590 until it becomes the A591 and head toward Windermere. At the Plumgarths roundabout, take the road to Windermere (still the A591). There is a short section of dual carriageway, and just before this ends, look for signage to a caravan and camping site on the left – this is Ashes Lane. Head down there for about 120m until the road forks, and park on the right branch in any one of several laybys. The grid reference for the starting point is SD48659625, whilst the what-3-words tag for the layby we parked at is **interview.rival.custodial**. If you are using Satnav to get there then try Ashes Lane, Staveley, Kendal, LA8 9JS as a destination.

We start by heading along the road, looking for the public footpath sign on the left hand side of the road – this takes us into the woodland at Rather Heath, along a clear path. We follow this in a generally South-westerly direction for 50m to cross a wooden footbridge and then continue for a further 50m until we arrive at a minor road – this is the left hand fork off the road we saw when we arrived. We cross and continue along the same path, until we get to the edge of Ratherheath Tarn.

We continue with the path, crossing a stile, and then across the field to a stile onto a minor road – this is Ratherheath Lane, and we turn left to walk along the road for a short . After no more than 150m we find a track on the right hand side heading South down to Moss Cottage – ahead we can see a group of farm buildings – this is Moss Side.

Just before we get to the farm, the track heads left into what at first looks like a small industrial area but the path continues past the side of a pond through a field with friendly donkeys, and then over a stile heading Southeast toward a large house at Bank End. The path skirts an area of woodland before arriving to the right of the house, and we then pick up the track to the house heading out to the right. We stay on the access track, heading South for no more than 100m, and need to look for a footpath sign heading up through a gate on the left hand side of the road. From here the path continues along the field edge crossing several stiles and eventually arriving at a minor road – we are now at Plumgarths.

At the road, we head left and walk along the road for 100m until we arrive at the head office of the Cumbria Wildlife Trust. Our walk then continues along the right hand side of the road just past the farm shop, and we need to look for a gate into the fields about 50m before we get to the roundabout. The path from here heads south – parallel to the main road – and gently uphill through three fields until we meet a farm track. We follow the track uphill until we get to Hellsfell Farm and follow it between the house and barn before turning hard right to walk behind the house and over to a stile in the drystone wall. As we climb down from the stile we look to the left and see a footbridge over the A591 – this is where we head next. On the far side of the bridge, we have a choice of paths. Our route is to the left and downhill back along the far side of the main road.

After following this path for about 200m, we see a large barn, and the path turns right to track along the contours toward the woodland at the base of Hellsfell Nab, before exiting back into open fields to follow a path, which becomes a track, finally arriving at allotments on the edge of the town centre.

We take a clear track down hill and past the side of the allotments to arrive at a main road – this is the A5284 Kendal to Windermere road. We cross and head left for just a short while (50m) before heading right into Fairfield Lane. We follow this for 100m and then emerge into a delightful park

with wonderful mature trees overlooked by grand Victorian houses. This is a great place to stop for lunch.

We are now about half way round the walk, and to start the return journey, we head back to where we emerged from Fairfield Lane and head left again, following the road uphill for 50m and then left into Underley Avenue, where we find a narrow passage between the houses and back into more open land, where we are presented with a choice of two paths – we took the left hand option, but in fact it makes very little difference, both go down to the same road (Low Garth) which follow to the right. We follow Low Garth round in a loop looking for an area of grassland on our right where the footpath exits back into open countryside – there is a sign but it's easy to miss.

At the end of the passage between the houses we cross a stile and then head Northwest toward farm buildings at Lane Foot. We do not go as far as the farm however as the path curves round to the right a little such that we skirt the front of the farm and then head North toward Burneside. We cross a beck, and then the path forks – we head right getting closer to the railway line over on our right. We press on heading consistently North and after a few muddy gate holes have been negotiated come up to Burneside at the cricket and football clubs where we meet a road (Hollins Lane). We head right and cross the railway at a level crossing.

We follow the road for a little while until after about 120m we arrive at a T junction. We head left here and see the church of St Oswald ahead on our right. We take a right turn at the side of the church and head toward the James Cropper plc paper mill – the dominant employer in the village for many generations. Our route from the paper mill is downstream along the right hand side of the river Kent and down to the first road bridge where we cross and head slightly uphill on Hall Road. We soon see a footpath sign on the left hand side of the road and pick up the Dales Way on a path that loops round the back of the mill and returns to the river so that we can follow it upstream. Once at the far side of the paper mill, we can see the weirs that were built to provide a steady head of water to the waterwheels that once powered the mill.

We follow the right hand bank of the Kent for a while now. After about ½ mile we arrive at Bowston where there is a road bridge over the river. The Dales Way way path stays on the right bank of the river, but we leave it and cross the road bridge and follow the road round to pick up a footpath on the left bank of the river - this arrives at a minor road after about 200m and we need to turn left to head away from the river.

We now walk up to the T junction at Winter Lane and look for the path continuing almost opposite – the path heads South across a couple of fields to meet a track where we turn right to cross the railway line at a bridge. We follow the track and after a while it approaches a house where we pick up the access road and head back toward the busy A591. We need to cross the main road to get back to our cars, and the best way to do this is via the permissive path under a subway to the left of the access road. Once through this, we bear right and cross a stile before following the wall back to the minor road where we started – we are slightly downhill of the start, and so need to walk left up the road for a short distance to finish.