

Sunbiggin Tarn & Great Asby Scar

We start at Sunbiggin Tarn, where roadside parking is generally available. To find the tarn, head North up the M6 to junction 38 then take the B6260 toward Orton. As you reach the outskirts of Orton, take the B6261 on the right – signed for Raisbeck. 100m after Raisbeck the road forks – go left and carry on until you see Sunbiggin Tarn on your right – park just before the cattle grid. If you are using Satnav to get there, then we found that the postcode CA17 4ND worked, and this corresponds to the grid reference NY67530781, and What-3-Words tag **textiles.restless.distilled**.

We start the walk from the layby before the cattle grid, keeping our back to the Tarn – to see a clear path that heads up onto Tarn Moor. We are on open access land here, so the route is not specifically designated as a right of way, but the route is well walked and quite clear – generally speaking we are heading northwest to start with. After only 200m another path crosses ours – this is the Dales Highway long distance route and the path we will be taking uphill to the flat plateau of Great Asby Scar, so when you see the two paths cross, bear right to head north.

We continue for another 400m and then pass through a gate into a field with a sheepfold and drystone wall to our left – from here the path continues to climb gently, never far from that wall. We head consistently north for a while now - the path remains clear, and after another gate, we eventually arrive at a corner in the wall. We head sharp left over a ladder stile, but the Dales Highway carries on, so don't be tempted along that well-trodden path – at least not today.

We carry on heading west through the pavement keeping the drystone wall to our left as both an aid to navigation, and an indication as to where the safest routes can be found. Clearly much attention needs to be paid to finding a safe foothold, but don't get so distracted that you forget to peer over the wall for great views south to the tarn and onward to the Howgills. Alternatively, you can look right and enjoy views of Murton Fell and glimpses of the valley that leads to High Cup Nick.

Our next milestone is Castle Folds, an unusual example of a heavily defended Romano-British stone hut circle settlement. It should be visible over to the right about 1.5 km after the first stile where we entered the pavement - if you get as far as another ladder stile, you have gone just slightly too far – look north from here and Castle Folds will be visible.

Having had a good look at the remains of Castle Folds, we head back toward the drystone wall where we see a choice of two stiles – a gate stile recently installed, and a ladder stile further to the right – we take the ladder stile and continue to follow the drystone wall for a while. As an aside – if you want to see the view from the Trig point at the top of Great Asby Scar at 412m – that's just through the newer stile, but if you make that short diversion don't be tempted to stay on the other side of the wall – the much better route is the one we outline.

We now continue to follow the wall – still on our left – until it heads downhill to meet the footpath coming up from Asby Winderwath Common – a path that Bentham Footpath group used on our Orton, Beacon Hill & Great Asby Scar walk. At the bottom of the valley, we find a gate and information board detailing the nature reserve and we head left now on much easier flat meadow.

As we walk gently uphill, we see Beacon Hill and the monument to Queen Victoria in the distance over to our right, and then after no more than 300m find a crossroads in the path, along with a fingerpost and distinctive gate. Here we head left going down through the gate to follow a path round the edge of Great Asby Scar – we are now on the return journey.

The path now heads south, and as we progress downhill, we get good views to the right over to Orton, and as we pass an enclosed reservoir on the hillside, we see start to see the Gamelands stone circle visible in the flat land ahead.

Our path soon arrives at a gate giving access to a wide green lane, which we follow, passing a lime kiln, until we have the stone circle and its access gate on our left, and we take a few minutes to explore this ancient monument which is thought to date back to the period between 1800-1400 BCE.

Our route back to the tarn is along the flat ground at the base of Great Asby Scar, and we start by heading back up the lane (called Knott Lane) looking for a finger post on the right directing us along the Coast to Coast path. This is a well-used path, so the way should be very clear, but in essence we walk through a number of fields, passing a well renovated barn until we arrive at a minor road in front of a row of cottages. Here we turn left and walk along the road for a while – it only serves one farm, so you are unlikely to meet any traffic.

We pass Sunbiggin Farm (which offers refreshments in the summer) and then the road becomes a track we continue to follow. We are now heading directly toward the tarn, but the track we are on soon curves round to the left so to find the tarn we need to branch right – there is a marker board detailing the paths on the Open access land that we can use as a landmark. From there, the path is clear and just 400m later we are back at our starting point.

- **Total distance 12.7 km (7.9 miles)**
- **Total ascent 233 m**
- **Moderate walk**