

# Lunesdale ramble from Kirkby Lonsdale

We start in Kirkby Lonsdale, using the free parking close to Devil's Bridge. For those unfamiliar with the area, Kirkby is on the A65, and Devil's Bridge is at the junction between the A65 and the A683 Sedbergh road. There are free parking spaces on the Kirkby side of the river on Bridge Brow, or on the east side using the signed car parking spots. Take care if parking near the bridge on the east as there are restrictions on some days, and if your vehicle has the wrong number of wheels, you may incur a ticket. If you are using Satnav, try Bridge Brow, Kirkby Lonsdale, LA6 2DF as an address, or if your device accepts what-3-words tags, the exact location of the parking to the east of Devil's bridge is **reinstated.coverings.durations**, which corresponds to OS grid reference SD61627824.

On the Kirkby side of the bridge there is a picnic area, and our path goes through the centre of this and over to the A65, which we cross with care. We take the gate opposite and follow the path through the field heading up toward the back gardens of the houses to our right where we find a narrow path up to the road – the B6254 to Whittington. We cross that road and continue opposite climbing up the steep bank of the hillside at Wood End. The path is generally clear, but if in doubt stay to the left of the field close to the trees, and don't forget to pause to look right across to Kirkby and back toward Casterton Fell as these are the best views.

We follow the edge of the woodland until we get to Wood End, where there is new housing under construction, and note a junction with another path coming over from the western end of Kirkby near the school. We go left here toward the white-washed cottages and take the lane alongside them on a path signed for Sellet Mill. The route here is initially easy – but as we progress further south it joins with a minor stream. During dry weather this is barely visible, but after heavy rain, this section of path requires some care, or can even be impassible. The section where the path coincides with stream lasts for just 100m or so and after we have cleared this Sellet Mill comes into view – in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century this was a water powered corn mill but has since been converted to a private house. The current owners have retained the mill pond that was historically used to maintain consistent water flow to the water wheel and created an attractive garden around it.

Fifty metres after the mill pond, we take a sharp right to walk toward a gate at the end of a row of cottages, and from there down to a second gate where we cross a minor stream to head right along the field boundary – we are now heading toward Sellet Hall and need to look for the point where the path crosses through the hedgerow about 150 ahead. As we stroll through this field you may notice the top of what appears to be a built structure slightly out of sight on the hill to the left. This is a hidden gem, just the trig point at the top of Sellet Bank at 117m.

Having crossed the hedgerow, we keep to the left of the next field and soon see a road ahead to the right of Sellet Hall – a rather attractive farmhouse probably dating to the 16<sup>th</sup> century with extensive 17<sup>th</sup> century additions and alterations. We cross a stile to get to the road and then immediately walk left passing the front of Sellet Hall on Hosticle Lane.

We pass a track on the right (overgrown and barely visible) that leads to a disused quarry, then pass along the edge of Hagg Wood, with the trees to our right. We note an attractive large house on our left and then 600m later arrive at the village of Whittington - we are now in Lancashire. Whittington is notable as one of a cluster of sites along the Lune valley, each with clear archaeological evidence of a Norman Motte and Bailey castle. There are similar remains at Burton in Lonsdale, Melling and Arkholme, making this area the most intense area of Norman castles outside the Welsh borders.

The Motte is within the grounds of St Michael the Archangel church, which we see just to our left, so we head into the church grounds, to look down toward the river Lune and see a clear path between two fences at the far end of the modern section of the graveyard. This is our onward path, and it soon emerges onto the B6254 at the lodge house for Whittington Hall. Opposite this is a waymarked track, called Conegarth Lane which leads down to the riverside. This is another section of the walk which is simple to navigate, with easy walking in fine weather – when it has been wet however expect the lane to be somewhat challenging.

Once we arrive at the riverside we meet the Lune Valley Ramble path – we take this upstream heading left back toward Kirkby, but before we do so, we enjoy lunch at the riverside.

The remainder of the walk requires absolutely no navigational skill, we simply follow the riverside path all the way back to Kirkby Lonsdale. That does not mean of course that the walk is dull. There is much to see and hear on the way. The first 500m or so of the return path brings us to Burrow Mill Lane, an alternate path down from Whittington, which shortens the route somewhat for those short of either time or energy. Opposite this is Nether Burrow – where when the river is at it's lowest it is apparently possible to wade over for a pint at the Highwayman.

This part of the river is a good place for bird spotting. As we strolled past, we saw herons, egrets, widgeon, and goosander. Widgeons are perhaps best identified by their distinctive whistle, which is not at all like the usual quack of a duck.

Just a few metres upstream from this, on the far side of the Lune, we see the confluence with the Leck Beck, and a quick glance at the OS map shows the location of a Roman fort just to the north of this. From river level where we are standing this is not particularly clear, but when viewed on the flythrough on our website, it stands out as a clear circular artifact. Archaeological evidence suggests that a timber fort was established here late in the first century (during the Flavian dynasty) but relatively little is known about it. Excavation of the clay-and-turf ramparts and defensive ditches also suggests a second period of occupation at a so far undetermined time. A substantial camp outside the fortified settlement known as a vicus seems to have developed along the roads to the north and west.

Further north we see a bridge across the lune, and we might be tempted to think that we are arriving back at Kirkby. Not yet – this is a pipe bridge, part of the Haweswater Aqueduct a 72 mile water transfer system that brings water from Haweswater in the Lake District to Manchester via an interim local storage reservoir at Heaton Park. This hugely important part of our national infrastructure is one that we have come across on other Bentham Footpath Group Walks – such as our Tatham Fells walk.

We continue up the riverbank toward Kirkby, noting some diversions of the path to cope with erosion of the banks, and soon have Stanley Bridge, which carries the A65 over the Lune, in our view. As we get closer, we see a path up to the main road, which we cross to end the walk, noting as we do the plaque on the parapet of the bridge stating that it was built in 1931 by the Reinforced Concrete Construction Company of Old Trafford. This bridge could not really be described as beautiful, but as it approaches it's centenary, it does at least seem to have lasted reasonably well.

- **Total distance 10.9 km (6.8 miles)**
- **Total ascent 151 m**
- **Easy walk**