

WATENDLATH VALLEY

A peaceful and varied walk through a traditional and small Lakeland valley. This could be a good "car free" day out but which is very flexible in length and time.

Distance - About 7.5 miles /12 km taking c 3.5hours actual walking time for the whole route.

Grade - Generally easy but with several short uphill sections on both on road and tracks. Some paths rough and uneven, wet in places.

Access - From Keswick by the Borrowdale bus or the launch service to Ashness landing stage / Watendlath road end. By car on the B5289.

Map - OS Explorer - The English Lakes - North Western - OL4 - 1: 25000

Start from the cattle grid just above the road end junction and walk steadily uphill through woodland for ten minutes. At the wall end read the plaque on the small cairn, in memory of the legendary Bob Graham. Ashness Bridge, a classic viewpoint, is now in sight.

Over the bridge, continue on the road up two hill sections, passing Ashness Farm on the left. You soon reach Surprise View on the right, with a wonderful panorama across Derwentwater, Keswick and Skiddaw. The last of serious uphill!!

Keep on the road through mossy mixed woods. In a few minutes bear right off the road onto a broad track leading downhill to a gate; turn right and cross the footbridge. Here turn left at the stone Indicator towards Watendlath following the riverside path.

Pause at the next footbridge. In front is a small glaciated valley, the craggy sides forming the textbook U shape, with the white buildings of the hamlet in the distance. This is a tributary valley, left behind when the large Borrowdale glacier eroded the main valley so much more deeply than the one in which you stand, a "hanging valley". The beck, from this near level gradient soon tumbles down a series of rapids and waterfalls to reach lake level.



Just before reaching Watendlath there are good views down valley and, farther on, to Skiddaw. At the gate, look for the engraved stone in the paving on your side of the pack horse bridge. The walk continues on the right hand side of the tarn, but you may wish to use this as a convenient picnic/ cafe stop.

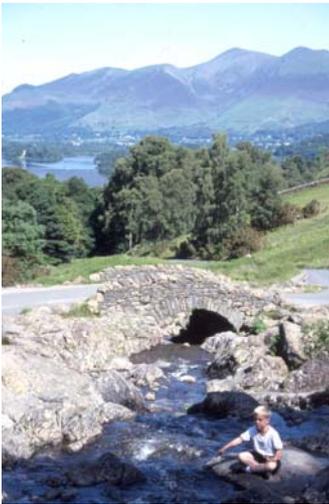
Most of the land in the valley is owned by The National Trust. The number of sheep is now regulated following the foot and mouth epidemic. The native Herdwick breed is stocky and easily recognised by its woolly legs; last years lambs have dark brown fleeces, adults become greyish in colour.

The other main breed here is the black faced Swaledale. Beef cattle are increasingly important. Dependent on the time of year, the flocks will be out

on the high open fells or kept close in the stone walled and green intake fields. Farming here is neither easy nor profitable.
NB- The next loop of the walk can be very wet underfoot after heavy or prolonged rainfall.

Stay to the right of the outflow and the tarn. Through the gate bear left onto the path signed Dock Tarn. The walled track leads out onto open fields and a small ford before climbing beside a stream up to a gate. Turn left and shortly reach a direction sign. Go right to Puddingstone Bank on a narrow path with marker poles and find a large gateway in a few minutes

The faint track lies northwards across open moorland with a wall and small crags on your left. Keep on in the same direction to a gate close to the main Watendlath to Rosthwaite footpath. Good views to the left (West) of the high fells of Borrowdale. Go to the right (East) and soon descend steeply to the tarn.



This time, cross the bridge and, if not cafe bound, turn left and follow the quiet walled road down valley, with the chance to look around instead of watching your feet. Half an hour brings you to Surprise View again and then on down to Ashness Bridge.

From here, either walk down the road or, better still, take the upward diagonal path on the right to a gate in the wall. Then, bear left downhill with lovely views out over Derwentwater to Bassenthwaite Lake and beyond. The path winds among gorse and hawthorn until, in about 15 minutes, reaching a clearing under Falcon Crag, where a sign directs you sharply down left to Borrowdale road and the start point.

The energetic could enjoy the lovely lake shore walk back to Keswick!!

