



Hidden Britain Centres help you discover, explore and become part of, the fascinating wealth of local landscape, history, culture, food and community life in undiscovered parts of Cumbria, something that is rarely possible in better known holiday areas, providing a truly different and memorable experience.



Discover Low Furness – a land of stunning seascapes, beautiful skies and subtle light, tucked away between the Lake District Mountains and Morecambe Bay.

LOW FURNESS Weekender Walk



Follow the trail and take a journey through this hidden corner of Cumbria. Find out more about the magic and mystery of the people who shaped the landscape of Low Furness and whose heritage remains for us to explore today.



HIDDEN LIGHT-LOW FURNESS

Evidence for mankind's 'spiritual journeying' from earliest times lies relatively undisturbed across the beautiful Furness Peninsular. There is a stone circle on Birkrigg Common, burial mounds, earth works, standing stones, sacred wells alongside significant remains of Neolithic, Bronze Age and Roman habitation. Much more awaits the interested wanderer...

The 'christianising' of pagan religious sites and the growth and development of Christianity can be evidenced in and through Low Furness' religious buildings, some of which are still active places of worship, prayer and pilgrimage. Recent archeological discoveries show that the epicentre for the growth and spread of Christianity could have been the church of St. Mary and St. Michael, Great Urswick, a former Celtic monastic site built upon a substantial Roman site and associated with the early Celtic saints, at the heart of this delightful rural community and 'gateway' to an amazing 'hands on' exploration of Low Furness.

It is not difficult to imagine how remote Furness was from the rest of the mainland of Britain. One of the oldest and most hazardous routes was across the sands of Morecambe Bay, a route well



known to early travellers, used by the Romans and by pilgrims and other 'religious' moving between sacred sites and monasteries. The atmosphere remains tantalisingly mysterious and deeply peaceful on many sections of this walk- a walk to be 'experienced'.....

Throughout the 20th Century as in most of the affluent west, the established churches had been in steady decline whilst the growth of 'individual spirituality and a search for meaning' has been significant. Many of the churches in Low Furness sustain small, faithful worshipping groups today. It has experienced the pain of 'rural retreat', a reduction in the number of farms, the loss of village schools, post offices, shops and the like.

'New century' communities are being established in the villages which are very different from

former times and the spiritual journey continues to seek a modern expression.

Great Urswick has once again become the focus for education, for community and for the development of a 'new Celtic spirituality' for today.

We hope and trust you will enjoy the 'total experience' of our beautiful area and will take time to explore and enjoy an inward journey as well as a great walk!

Please respect the area and the situations of those who live here, stay a while, share it with us, enjoy it for what it is and then take away a special memory with you- until next time!

The 'Weekender' is part of the Hidden Light- Low Furness Project, supported by Hidden Britain Centres and the Lake District Peninsulas Tourism Partnership, and is a Low Furness community project.

Map:
OS Outdoor Leisure Series No 6 (1:25 000)

Distances:
About 18 miles in all but an 'escape route' is provided to reduce to 12 miles. Other variations are possible using the OS Map.

Time:
As long as you wish.

Conditions:
A guided Heritage Walk which takes us through some of the most varied and historically significant countryside in the North of England. This challenging walk on the 'fringes' of the Lake District covers beach walking, well-trodden tracks and paths, limestone outcrops, minor country roads and some of the many ancient 'green tracks' of Low Furness. A walk to be 'experienced'.

Strong footwear and waterproof clothing recommended!

Early 'travellers' entered Low Furness 'oversands' and emerged at Conishead Bank (near to Conishead Priory now the Manjushri Buddhist Centre) and travelled inland via Red Lane, a former Roman road. Our walk begins along this road.

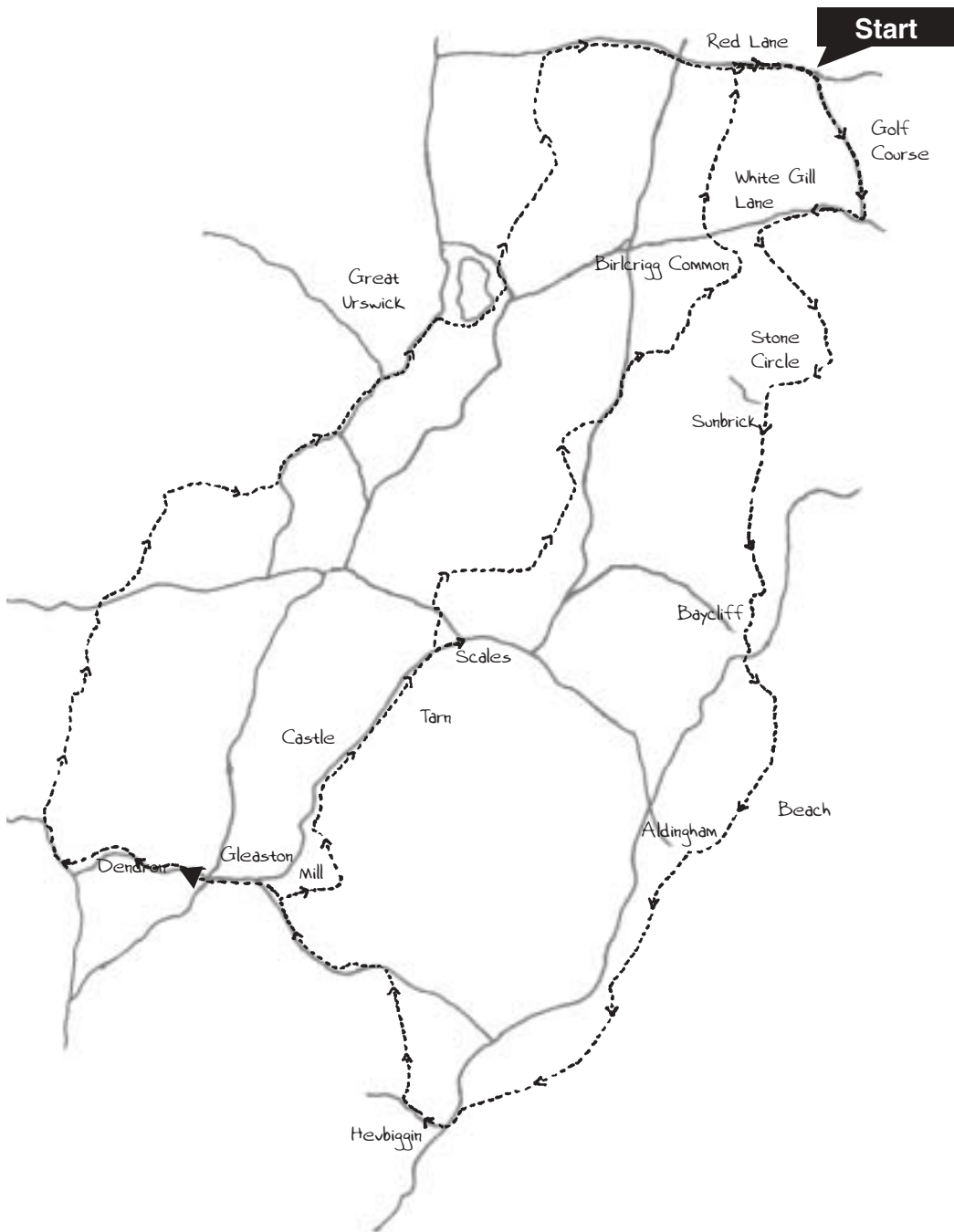
Travelling from Ulverston by car (or bus) turn right almost immediately after the Manjushri Centre towards Bardsea; take the next right (signed 'Urswick, Lindal'). After about half a mile where the golf course boundary wall runs out on the left), Oxley's on the right, there is parking for several cars.

At the corner of the golf course find a Public footpath sign and take a gentle stroll of about half a mile through glade and woodland path to emerge on another road at the foot of Birkkrigg Common.

For more information about the Project and about this unique area please see our extensive website:

www.explorelowfurness.co.uk





There are numerous paths over and around **Birkrigg**, an area steeped in early history. Your map will indicate ancient settlements, a stone circle, a pilgrims' cross and a Quaker grave yard, and much else worth finding; evidence of quarrying is all around.

Walk around the seaward side of Birkrigg at any height and in due course you need to emerge on the other side at the 17th Century settlement of 'Sunbrick'. This was a significant Quaker settlement visited by George Fox. The Quaker burial ground is marked on the map- about 100 yards North West of Sunbrick; the memorial stone indicates that between 1654 and 1767, 227 'Friends' were buried there, including Margaret Fox, wife of the Society's founder, George Fox.

Depending on where you meet the road you need to find the corner of the Farm House on the corner right at the bottom of Sunbrick. A farm gate will lead you into an old green track;

follow this towards Baycliffe for a mile or so. Enjoy the views!

The track becomes a stony road (Sunbrick Lane) and emerges into Baycliffe village. Continue through the village until you find the Green (near the Farm Shop). Take a little path to the left (phone box) to emerge onto the Coast Road by the Fishermen's Arms.

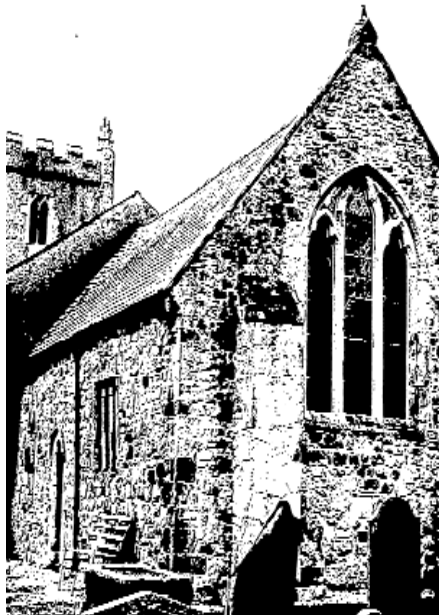
You may wish to pause here for refreshment!

When ready to move on, turn right along the main road, take a lane (Leythey Lane) on the left and follow this, keeping right at the junction, and emerging quite by surprise on the stony beach. Turn right along the beach and enjoy a bracing walk along the shore of Morecambe Bay accompanied by the sight and sound of many seabirds until you see the outline of St.Cuthbert's Church at Aldingham.

The Church is open each day for you to enjoy a particular 'peace and quiet' on your journey.



You are very welcome to eat your sandwiches on the benches in the graveyard overlooking the sea. *There is also a public toilet with disabled facilities here!*



Aldingham

When suitably refreshed, continue your beach walk, around the headland, under the remains of the mysterious motte and bailey on the headland, pass by a small residential caravan park and emerging onto the Coast Road at Sea Mill. This is part of the Cumbria Coastal Way.

Ahead of you is the little hamlet of Newbiggin; turn right here into Newbiggin itself, continue up the road and into a farm track at the top right hand side; after a further 100 metres or so look for a public footpath on your right into the field, cross it, over a small bridge and then turn at 45 degrees across the next field to a gap in the corner.

You can see Gleaston Park Farm ahead of you on the hillside; a walk in a direct line will bring you to a gate to exit the field; turn left on this wonderful 'switch-back' road and go uphill towards Gleaston.

A short piece of road walking is 'eased' by superb views into the rural heart of Low Furness.

Immediately in front of the 30-mile limit sign on the right is an unmarked gate leading onto another ancient gated 'green track'. Take this. Once through the second gate, follow the right hand hedge around the field, emerging

at the top of the field by a gate and path to the right. Don't take it. Continue ahead through the stile beside the smaller gate in front of you and then follow the hedge and wall on your left; this finally joins a stony path and track which comes out on the road between Gleaston Castle Farm (*to the right*) and Gleaston Mill (*to the left*).

This is a fascinating area to explore and of course the Mill has a restaurant and bar together with a shop and Mill Exhibition for all ages.

It is also decision time!
From here you could begin your return journey via Scales (see page 15) or continue with the 'Weekender' challenge.

TO CONTINUE...

Take the road through Gleaston village, along Mill Lane. Turn right at the junction into the hardly appropriately named Main Street. Continue along Main Street for about 100 yards, looking out for the attractive historic houses in the village and the old well. At the t-junction



cross the road (take care crossing) and take the lane up the hill signed 'Dendron and Dalton'. Passing by 'The Garth' continue uphill for a little longer until you reach a further t-junction.

You might like to spend a little time exploring the hamlet of Dendron to the left and to visit the unusual Church of St. Matthew built in 1642 at a time of religious and political turmoil in the country. Particularly beautiful in the Spring.

Retrace your steps to pass by the road back towards Gleaston, instead walking towards Dalton and continue along the road to the sound of a 'babbling brook' for about 250 yards; as you approach a sharpish bend to the left in the road, you will notice a row of very old, very dead, ivy-clad trees and a metal field gate. Do not go into the field

The path you need is tucked away behind the trees (there is a faint path between the bramble bushes which takes you over the brook, through a gap stile and into the field).

Turn left along the inside of the hedge, through the gate- there is a small stile here- and into the next field, still keeping to the left edge of the field.

After about 100 yards a public footpath marker will direct you through a gap into an adjacent, narrower field; once in this field continue ahead with the hedge on your right hand side. You can still hear the murmurings of the brook to your left.

Go over the stile beside the gate ahead of you and into the next field, continuing ahead uphill alongside the hedge on your right.

At the next gate pause and get your bearings.

Ahead of you is Stainton village, your next destination, with Little Urswick Crags beyond.

Continue through the stile, cross the field to meet another stile in the bottom right hand corner of the field (this can be quite muddy at times). Once over the stile go almost immediately left into the next field and cross it diagonally left to meet a clear gap in the hedge; go through the gap keeping the hedge on your right. This will bring you to a gate in a stone wall (again, this stretch is fairly muddy in wet weather).

Once through the gate you can cross the grassy area with interesting scattered boulder stones walking to the right towards the brightly painted houses beyond to emerge by a bus shelter opposite a red telephone box. This is Stainton.

On arriving at the road through the village, turn right with the old Forge on your left, pass by Stainton Village Hall (formerly a Congregational Church). Immediately after the Hall turn left along the narrow lane and continue uphill for about half a

mile until you come to a substantial stone wall on the right hand side. Take the signed footpath into the field, towards Bolton Heads.

You are now entering the 'oldest' section of the Trail and evidence of Neolithic, Iron Age, Bronze age and Celtic habitation and activity can be spotted all around you, much of it undisturbed and unexplored to date. You can 'feel' the age of the place as you walk through it!

If current archaeological investigations are proven to be even half right then Great Urswick and its Tarn lie at the centre of a hugely important Heritage site unique to Britain and probably Europe. More of this when we reach Urswick.

Take the footpath across the field to the gate in the right hand corner and take the kissing gate into the next field.



Continue across the field passing a large mound on your left (nothing exciting-it's a rubbish dump!); forge ahead across the field and downhill, past another wooded mound on your left, with Bolton Manor Farm ahead of you until you reach a double gate.



Bolton Heads

There are good views of the crags and of Birkrigg ahead of you. The path here is often muddy so take care as you walk.

Descend using the clearly defined farm track through a double farm gate onto the road opposite Bolton Manor Farm. Incidentally, the remains of the ancient 'Bolton Chapel' can still be seen at the farm.

Turn left along the road for a leisurely walk towards Little Urswick, noting the style and age of some of the buildings. At the junction turn left and keep going! To the left is the Green and the former Urswick Grammar School and Swan public house, now family dwellings.

You are nearing the end of this section of the walk and within half a mile or so will be able to rest, eat, drink and relax to your heart's content in Great Urswick.

Continue for now past the Recreation Hall (1929), the Low Furness Church of England School and into Great Urswick itself.



Urswick / Tarn

Our route continues from the stunning Church of St.Mary and St.Michael which you will have passed by on the right as you entered the village. This is a truly remarkable old Church, the mother church of Furness and a centre of a rich and wonderful heritage. Take a look for yourself.

You can also obtain further information about our Christian

Heritage and the 'gems' of Low Furness from here (and details of other walks).

On leaving the Church, turn left around the back of the Church; facing the Tarn look for a small gate in the wall in front of the bungalow opposite. Go through, turning right downhill, across the field to a small bridge.



From the bridge look North towards the houses nestling close to the Tarn; there is much to see. On a good day, depending on the time of year you can see coots, heron, cormorants, swans, Canada geese, gulls and other smaller birds which thrive in reed beds and damp places. The Tarn is rich in feeding for them.

Above the houses at the end of the village you can see a hedge-lined track ascending the hillside beyond; this is part of the Cistercian Way and your next destination on leaving Urswick.

From the bridge turn slightly left, crossing the field to reach a stile/gate near the far corner of the stone wall. Turn left along the minor road and left again at the T-junction. At the top of the hill past Low Barn take a steepish track to your right and continue uphill. Towards the summit the track continues between stone walls; enter the field by the left-hand gate of two and continue ahead.

To your right you can see the slopes of Birkrigg Common, to the

left the ruins of an ancient Iron Age and early historic period hill fort, partially excavated several years ago. There is a Tumulus nearby.

The views ahead of you towards the Lake District are absolutely stunning!

Continue along the path with the stone wall on your right, do not go through the next gate but continue to the end of the wall, turning into the next field and continuing to follow the wall down until you reach the road at the bottom of the field.

This is the old Roman route, Red Lane.

As a matter of interest, should you wish to continue for not more than 100 metres to the left along Red Lane you will see significant examples of Roman masonry on the opposite wall!

Your homeward journey takes you to the right. Turning neither to the left or the right and perhaps looking for more Roman evidence as you walk, return to your vehicle in about three-quarters of a mile or so. Safe journey!



Castle

Alternative Return Route GLEASTON- BARDSEA

This little 'corridor' between the Mill, Castle ruins and Scales represents an amazing 'time line' because recent discoveries in the immediate area have indicated evidence of life from Neolithic times through to contemporary farm and community living. Bronze Age artefacts were found locally, human bones in a cave just above the road. Of more 'recent' visual interest is the evidence all around of the feudal farming strip system, the historical use of water power for milling corn, and so on. The castle ruins bring to mind the

invasion of the Scots and 13th and 14th century 'landlords'. Coins and other pieces found in local fields cover the post-Norman period and middle ages (Henry and Elizabethan coins and much else). Roman coins have also been unearthed.

Perhaps these thoughts will fuel your imagination and 'sharpen' your vision as you walk the necessary half mile or so of quiet road towards Scales (a Viking name!).



As you descend the hill look to the right and to Mere Tarn; see if you can spot the resident heron and other water birds there. This is now Private Fishing.

At the point where the road bends and passes over the little feeder stream you will notice a green pathway. At the time of writing this was badly overgrown and difficult to walk so it is advised to ignore this path, continue for a few yards more to the next footpath on the left, through the stile and into the field beyond. Cross the field to emerge in Scales Village. A left turn up the hill passing Aldingham Parish Hall on the right will bring you to 'Beech House'. Take the path into 'Back Lane'.

This is a truly beautiful old hedged track best experienced in silence. Feel the age!

Ignore both gates and continue ahead along the path bearing slightly right. This path, with another gate or two across farm

entrances will take you round the back of Scales village. You might notice some old lime kilns of unknown vintage on the right

On coming to a clearing with farm gates in all directions continue with the hedge on your left, pass one gate and through the next one facing you. The lane ahead is a little overgrown in places but well worth the effort. Don't turn off but continue through several more gates until reaching another clearing and crossing place. Look for the gap stile in the wall facing you as you emerge from the Lane.

Go into the field, walking towards a group of trees ahead. You will notice Birkrigg Common ahead and to the right.



Birkrigg

Keep to the left of the trees towards a stone wall; walk on with the wall on your right side; find another through-stile in the wall ahead and continue to follow the wall. As you join a clear path from the left, turn right through a gate into the field and descend beside the wall until you emerge onto the metalled road. Cross the road towards the cattle grid on the right and take the bracken-lined green track towards Birkrigg immediately to your left.

Keep ahead where another path crosses. Notice how the views unfold!

On reaching the minor road, bear right for a short while until the vista of Morecambe Bay appears ahead of you.

Take a left turn onto a clear path which will take you to the white trig point and seat (noticing evidence of quarrying) on the top of Birkrigg. Continue ahead with

the 'Hoad lighthouse' monument in the distance directly ahead. As you descend Birkrigg notice the hedged straight green track ahead of you.

Follow this looking out for evidence of Roman masonry in the field wall on your left, until you come to Mountbarrow Farm and back onto Red Lane.

Turn right to retrieve your car.

Unless you have accommodation or other arrangements to return to, why not continue into Bardsea village; food, drink, accommodation if you wish, and another beautifully situated Victorian Church to admire with superb views over the Bay towards Chapel Island where the 'over sands' travellers would have enjoyed simple hospitality and a gentle welcome from the monks.





Morecambe Bay

WELL,
YOU CAN DREAM,
CAN'T YOU!

Although every effort has been made by the Guide compilers to ensure that the information supplied is correct, we cannot accept liability for the consequences of any errors or omissions it may contain.

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