

Walk 1-L Bannerdale Crags & Blencathra

An iconic mountain and two lower peaks from Mungrisdale

Distance:

8¼ miles (13.2km)

Cumulative Height

2,800 ft.

Our rating: Strenuous

Getting there:

Turn right, out of Cazenovia and Blencowe Hall, Riverain or Wythburn along the local road to Greystoke. Keep ahead upon reaching the village green and continue along the B5288 road through Motherby to the A66 road. Turn right along the A66 for 3 miles and upon descending a long hill, with Blencathra towering up ahead, turn off right along the road signed to Mungrisdale and Caldbeck. Mungrisdale is reached after 2 miles. Pass by the village hall and then take the second turning on the left, where there is an 'honesty box' based parking area. There is no regular public transport serving Mungrisdale.

Local services: The village has an inn - The Mill Inn.

Note: The start point for this walk can be reached along the road at a distance of 8½ miles (each way).

Start grid: NY361303

Map: OS Explorer OL5

The English Lakes North-eastern area

This walk starts from Mungrisdale village and firstly climbs alongside 'The Tongue' to then turn across the dramatic escarpment of Bannerdale Crags. It next drops down to cross the col at the head of the River Glenderamackin before ascending, with some scree, to traverse the 'Saddleback' ridge of Blencathra. The descent back to Mungrisdale is via Scales Fell and the long broad ridge of Souther Fell.

The Walk

1. Commence the walk from the further end of the car park along a Public Footpath signed to Mungrisdale Common. Pass by some dwellings then through a gate into open rough pasture. The River Glenderamackin will be to the left side. Continue across flat ground on a well-defined path towards the prominent 'nose' of 'The Nab'. The path crosses a footbridge over Bullfell Beck, after which a path junction is reached.

2. Continue along the right hand path (the left following the Glenderamackin River valley) and begin the steep rise up and across the hillside flank of 'The Tongue'. This path is well used and clear but it is important to keep rising up the hillside and not get deflected along paths to the left which have lesser gradients. The Bannerdale Crags will be increasingly visible to the left side and once the path has reached their upper level and begun to flatten, turn of sharply left at a junction of paths. Follow along the narrow path at the top level of the crags eventually rising up steeply to reach the summit cairn. *Bannerdale is generally derived as a name from 'holly valley' but in this case there is no evidence of such growth.*

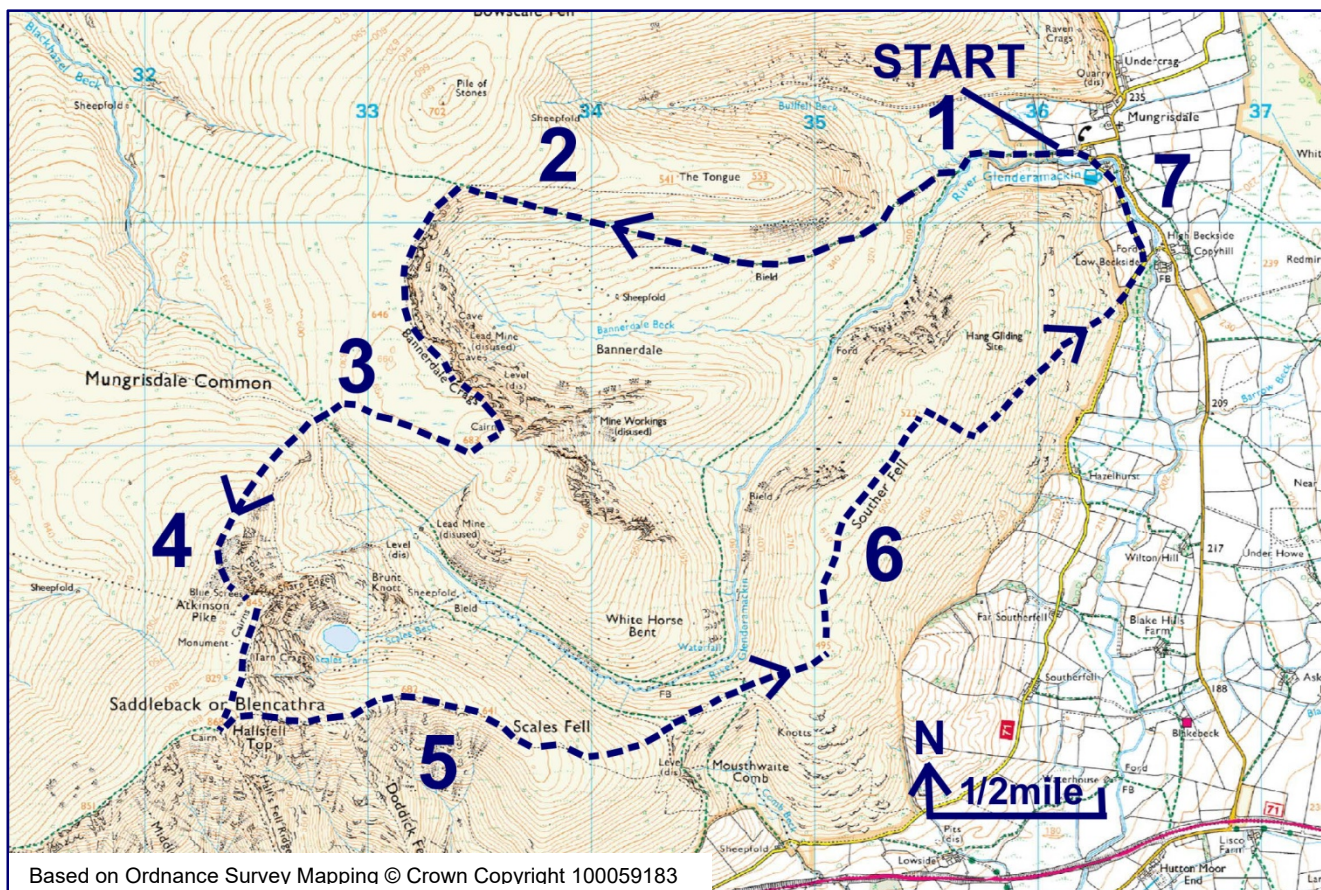
3. Turn right at the cairn along a grassy path

which crosses the top level of the fell. After a short distance this path turns around to the right and drops downhill, with the upper reaches of the Glenderamackin Valley to the left. It then joins with other paths as it descends and turns to the left to reach the col at the top of the valley (GR NY327291).

4. Cross over the col and continue ahead and uphill along a clear grassy with an increasingly craggy cliff to the left side. At this point you will see across left to the cliffs of Sharp Edge. The grassy path rises up for about ½ mile and then gives way to the screes of 'Blue Scree'. Continue up these screes and at the top the cairn of Atkinson Pike (2,772ft/845m) will be reached. This marks the northern end of the Blencathra summit ridge and additionally the top of the Sharp Edge ridge. Continue on from here across the broad grassy 'saddle' area of Blencathra to reach the highest cairn of the mountain on Hallsfell top (2,848ft/868m).

Monument Crosses: When traversing the saddle the path passes by a large ground level flat quartzite cross feature (16ftx10ft). This is ascribed to an un-identified walker who died on the ridge many years ago. It was extended to its current size in the 1940's by a local enthusiastic walker from Threlkeld - Harold Robinson. Although difficult to spot there are two further crosses on the summit area. Here, set into the ground, is located the ring of a former Ordnance Survey Trigonometrical Station (GR NY323277). *Blencathra or Saddleback is derived from 'the summit of the seat-like mountain'.*

5. You may wish to explore the remaining summit area which has two more peaks along its axis: Gategill Fell top (2,792ft/851m) and Blease Fell top (2,638ft/804m). If you do then return again to Hallsfell top for the remainder of the walk. Leave this summit in an Easterly direction and drop downhill on the path that descends via Scales Fell. This has some zig-zag sections but keep in this general direction along the descending fell ridge. Do not follow the route to the right that descends the sharper Doddick Fell, nor that to the left that drops steeply to Scales Tarn. As the fell is descended pass around the top of steeper slopes to the right, then turn left with the main path and drop down to the col or pass ahead which lies between Mouthwaite Comb to the right and the Glenderamackin Valley to the left. A number of converging, diverging and cross paths exist in the vicinity of the col, but the path to follow is that which leads towards the rising Souther Fell path ahead.



6. After crossing the col continue uphill onto the flank of Souther Fell. This path reaches a first lower summit area from where it turns to the left or north. Continue then along the broad upper area of the fell to the second of two further summit areas. The second is the highest point of the fell (1716ft/523m). *For a few years in the middle of C18th, this fell was the site of spectacular ghostly scenes. These involved Midsummer's Eve sightings of armies, sometimes including carriages and witnessed in 1745 by 25 or more people. A linkage with the 1745 Jacobite rebellion has been suggested.* Once visited turn sharply right and make your way downhill across rough grassland and amongst bracken as far as a slanting grassy path that drops diagonally down the flank of the fell. Once reached, turn left and drop downhill along the path to eventually reach the local road close to a cattle grid crossing. *Mungrisdale: This is derived from a combination of 'grisdale' for the valley where young pigs graze. Porklings were apparently running wild on the local hill slopes in C18th. 'Mun' might refer to the early British wandering missionary 'St. Mungo' or simply 'monk' in recognition of a local pre-reformation chantry.*

7. Bear left, along the road, which shortly passes alongside 'The Mill Inn' before reaching a bridge and 'T' junction. Turn left here, then after a few yards turn left again onto the 'car park' road and the end of the walk.