

# Ash Landing and Claife Heights ... 7½ miles Windermere, Cumbria

This walk along Windermere features a dramatic viewing point at Low Blind How, where a gap in the wall leads to a crag boasting stunning views of the lake, islands and the Troutbeck fells. The view provides ample reward for the extra effort required to get here.

**Start:** Ash Landing car park  
**Grid ref:** SD388954 **Map:** OS Explorer map OL7 (English Lakes south eastern area)

### Getting here & local facilities:

**By train:** Windermere rail station linked to Oxenholme station on main west coast line. Bus connection to Bowness Bay, Stagecoach 505/506

**By bus:** Stagecoach in Cumbria 505/506, from Kendal to Bowness

**By bike:** Kendal to Keswick cycle route passes through Windermere village (5 miles)

**By boat:** Windermere car ferry operates all year (except in high winds). Cross Lakes Shuttle (Windermere Lake Cruises) from Bowness Bay Pier 3 (pedestrian and cyclist ferry operates Easter to October)

**By car:** M6 Junction 36, A590 West then A591 to Plumgarths roundabout, B5284 to Bowness B5285, Windermere car ferry. Alternatively via Hawkshead B5285

Toilets (not National Trust) located at Ferry House and Ferry Nab. Small general store at Far Sawrey; NOTE TOILETS ARE NOT CURRENTLY OPEN, 2011.

### Look out for...

#### The Crier Of Claife

The Crier of Claife, a particularly noisy ghost, is reputed to be the spirit of a monk whose mission was to rescue fallen women. Alas, he fell in love, was rejected, went mad and died, and has wailed about it ever since. Eventually the crier was exorcised and banished to a small quarry (point 5 on the map).

#### Bark Barn

Just past Belle Grange house on the left is a large stone building set among some trees by the lake shore known as Bark Barn. Built in the 19<sup>th</sup> century for the storage of oak bark, the bark was stripped from the trees in April and stored in the barn before being transported to local tanneries for use in the leather making industry.

#### Strawberry (Waterloo) Gardens

On the left of what is now the Strawberry Gardens caravan site stands a high wall. This used to belong to a kitchen garden which served the Curwen family's 18<sup>th</sup>-century house on Belle Isle (the largest of Windermere's islands). The garden's fruit and vegetables were laid out to represent the opposing armies at the Battle of Waterloo.



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One of the best places in Lakeland to see wild deer, the Claife woods are home to both red and roe deer.

This is a really good area to see red squirrels. We are monitoring squirrel populations and trying to help the red by providing supplementary feeding stations and controlling the number of grey squirrels.

Thomas West wrote one of the first guidebooks to the lakes in 1778. The guide included several viewpoints or 'stations' where people could enjoy the best views of Windermere. Claife Station (1799) was built on the site of Thomas West's first viewing station.

**'Breathtaking views, rich and varied wildlife, interesting woodland archaeology and the ghost of a mad monk. What more could you ask from a walk in the Lake District?'**

Paul Farrinton, National Trust Ranger

### Walk distance, terrain and accessibility

Allow about 4 to 5 hours for this 7½ mile (13 km) circular route, walking at a moderate pace. There are some very steep slopes and rough path surfaces in places on Claife Heights, and also some wet spots and tree roots. Dogs are welcome but must be kept on leads, please.

### Directions

1. From the Ash Landing car park take the track with a low wooden barrier, leading uphill to the right at the back of the car park. Walk up the track and some stone steps. This leads to a junction with a tall beech tree in front of you, and a ruined building (Claife Station) beyond. Turn left along the broad path which veers right towards the building. Just before the building, turn left and continue uphill until you meet a junction. Turn right (signed to Hawkshead).
2. When you reach a wicket gate at a junction with a walled bridleway, turn left (signed to Sawrey) through woodland and pasture. The track divides, with a stony track to Hawkshead marked with white topped posts; follow this, veering right at the top of the ridge.
3. Skirting a marsh or pond (depending on the time of year) go through a gate, continuing with a wall on your right and a conifer plantation on your left until reaching a knoll. At the fork, ignore the left turn and carry on to a gate with a step stile. Cross the stile and continue. To your left is High Blind How.
4. Follow the path through the woodland and eventually bear left uphill, following the white topped posts to the top of the ridge, where you veer right running parallel to the lake. There is a side path off to the right, just beyond a white topped post which leads to a classic view over Windermere. Back on the broad path, follow the white topped posts until you reach a junction signed Hawkshead to the left and Belle Grange straight ahead.
5. Take the path straight ahead, following yellow arrows through woodland and bracken beds. Ignore the sharp turn to the right and bear left, keeping parallel with the lake. Eventually, you will drop down and cross a stream. Just beyond this, the path meets a junction signed as a public bridleway.
6. Turn left here (signed to Hawkshead). The track winds uphill at first, through larch woodland with Grange Beck on the right. After it passes a National Trust sign (to Claife estate), it levels out. Ignore any side paths until the path crosses a much broader forest track, signed as a bridleway to High Wray.
7. At the crossroad, turn right. After about three hundred yards there is a path to the right, marked with a blue arrow. Follow this through woodland until the path meets a wall and a tall gate. Go through and walk through the conifer plantation, ignoring any side paths leading to the road. Eventually you will go downhill to another gate. Go through and continue right through birch woodland. Go through another gate and past buildings on the right (base camp). Go straight ahead to join a bigger forest track, turn right and continue over the cattle grid and to the road junction at the bottom of the hill
8. At the junction, turn right walking along the road signed to Wray Castle and Ambleside, through the village of High Wray. Pass the village hall and after about a hundred yards, where the road veers left, turn right and follow the footpath to the lake. After about ten yards, go through the squeeze stile and little gate in the wall, walk down some steps and down the field, keeping the wall to your left. Go through another wicket gate and follow the field edge down to a step stile in front of a boathouse, on the lake shore.
9. Cross the stile onto the main lakeside path and turn right. In winter, when the lake is full, the shore sometimes floods and the walk becomes a wade. To avoid this, detour through the wood to the right, continue past another boathouse onto a surfaced drive and on to the house at Belle Grange. Just beyond the house, the track leaves the shore, for a while running parallel with it past Strawberry Gardens caravan park. When the path rejoins the shore, follow it back to the start point at the car park.

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