



ROMANTIC ROCKY ROADS

HISTORY YOU CAN SEE IN A LAKE DISTRICT
TOWN



ROMANTIC ROCKY ROADS

The booklet was made possible by a bequest to Skiddaw u3a by George Luckman.

After moving to Keswick as a family in the 1970s, George and his wife Maureen ran a haberdashery shop in Main Street, Keswick, until retiring in the 1990s. In later life, George fulfilled an ambition to self-publish his historic novel *The Curse of the Mardale Skull*, still available through Amazon. A great believer in lifelong learning, he remained inspired by the Lake District and its history, even after moving to Torquay following Maureen's death. George died in 2022.



Front cover. It is impossible to drive into Keswick without passing one of these elaborate signs, thought to be erected to promote tourism – probably in the 1960s. Keswick has been a 'Fair Trade' town since 2003. Of course, there is no such place as Keswick on Derwentwater.

ROMANTIC ROCKY ROADS

Keswick is situated in the most renowned walking area of England. Many books have been written by eminent authors about its history. This booklet is intended to combine easy walking with history you can see.

Literary Heritage..... Christopher & Sylvia Pilling

Building Stones..... Alan Smith

Roadside Heritage..... Bill Richardson

With thanks to Chris Knowles, Anna Nolan and Barbara Newton.

We hope that, in following the historic-themed walks in this booklet, you will be able to enjoy and learn about our local area. Remember, some locations are on private property, while others are people's homes.

Please respect their privacy.

A LITERARY WALK THROUGH KESWICK – Sylvia and Christopher Pilling.

Distance 3.75 miles

Starting at the Lakeside car park, the first building of note is the Theatre by the Lake.

The Century Theatre (also known fondly as the “Blue Box”) was a touring company travelling around the country. Pulled by trucks, it broke down on the Lakeside car park and remained a permanent fixture which served Keswick well for over 20 years. Sadly, time caught up with the wooden Blue Box and a replacement was needed. The Theatre by the Lake was opened on 19th August 1999 by Dame Judy Dench, and has been hosting plays, children’s theatre, musical performances, local productions, festivals and Words by the Water. Celebrity appearances include those by Melvyn Bragg, Ian McKellan, James Rebanks, Joanna Trollope and Rory Stewart. Former and present Poet Laureates, Carol Ann Duffy and Simon Armitage have also appeared. Plays produced include those by Shakespeare, Ibsen, Molière and Pinter.

From the Theatre by the Lake, the walk continues towards Friar’s Crag. On the approach, look out for a local stone plaque set in the wall, which is dedicated to Canon Hardwicke Drummond Rawnsley. Rawnsley was one of the four founders of the National Trust. He was a prolific writer, producing, inter alia, Lake District Sonnets, nine volumes of verse and 27 biographies, histories and guide books. He was notable also for erecting a monument on Helvellyn in memory of a dog, Fidelity, who stayed beside his dying master. He was Chair of Trustees of Dove Cottage, who had the oversight of the Rock

of Names at Thirlmere, as well as being a founder member of Keswick School.

Now walk towards Friar's Crag, where you will see the massive monument to John Ruskin. He was introduced to the area aged five by his nurse, and it left a lasting impression, he declaring later that it was one of the three most beautiful sites in Europe. Ruskin was an English polymath, writer, lecturer, art historian and art critic. He was a close friend of Marian Twelves, who produced the famous Ruskin Lace on High Hill.



Hugh Walpole and J B Priestley at Brackenburn

Keswick attracted many famous literary people, and, from Friar's Crag, you can look across the lake and see Brackenburn, Manesty, where Sir Hugh Walpole used to live. Walpole wrote the *Rogue Herries Chronicles*. Arthur Ransome wrote children's adventure stories, some set in the Lake District, including *Swallows and Amazons*. One of the characters, Darien, described where

they camped as a promontory dropping like a cliff into the sea. This was Friar's Crag. From here on a clear day, you can see right over to Lodore Falls in Borrowdale, made famous by the Robert Southey poem, *The Cataract of Lodore*.

Also across the lake, you can see where Beatrix Potter wrote her children's stories: Peter Rabbit at Lingholm, Benjamin Bunny at Fawe Park and Mrs Tiggy Winkle behind Catbells. Owl Island in Squirrel Nutkin is based on St Herbert's Island, Derwentwater.

Molly Lefebure, another author, lived in the Newlands Valley and wrote books on the Lake District and Cumberland heritage.

Re-trace your steps, past the Theatre by the Lake, and, after the Keswick Mountain Rescue base, turn right and follow the footpath, from which you will see the spire of St John's Church ahead. With your back to the double doors at the west end of the church, walk forward to the steps. Sir Hugh Walpole's grave is signposted to your left along the top of the terrace.

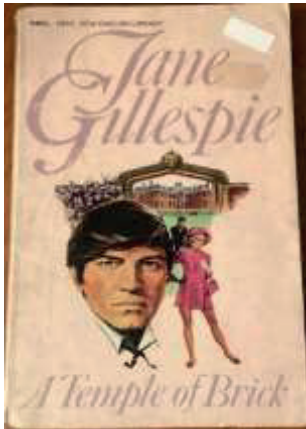
Walk past the church and turn left into St John's Street: opposite, you will find St John's Terrace, now converted into flats but once the home of John Richardson, a Cumbrian dialect poet and story teller who wrote *Cumberland Talk* – short tales and rhymes. A stonemason, originally from St John's in the Vale, he built Chaucer Terrace.



John Richardson

A little way down St John's Street on the left is the unique Alhambra Cinema, opened in 1913. The cinema has been in continuous operation ever since, apart from the Covid period, when it was refurbished in keeping with the original Art Deco style. It is well supported, has a Film Club, an annual Film

Festival and has been visited by famous directors, including Ken Loach, Nicholas Roeg and John Hurt.



Immediately after the cinema, turn left into Derwent Street, then first left again into The Seams, a former residence of the novelist Jane Gillespie, little known now, but her books can be found in Keswick Library. She wrote over 50 novels between 1953 and 1997 – mainly period fiction and about romance.

Now head back to St John's Street, and, at the bottom on the right, you will see the George Hotel, which was established in 1655. Here the Lake Poets, Southey, Coleridge and Wordsworth, met to confer and conduct their debates. This is commemorated by a plaque outside. In contrast, another group met to plan plumbago smuggling (extremely valuable black lead from the wad mines at Seathwaite!). Of late, poetry readings have been held here – one with belly dancing thrown in!

Into the Market Square now. In the Beatrix Potter story, *The Fairy Caravan*, Rattan and Scratch sell their elixir in Keswick Market. It was known that Keswick was a terrible place for drinking – women were jailed for it. Beatrix was believed to have said: "They belong to the lowest class in town and will not be missed". She was a frequent visitor to Keswick, spending summer holidays as a child at the Lingholm Estate or Fawe Park before moving to the Lake District permanently upon her marriage in 1913.

Further down Main Street on the right is the Inn on the Square, formerly the Queen's Hotel and, before that, the Queen's Head. John Hadfield, the imposter and bigamist who married Mary Robinson, *The Beauty of Buttermere*, stayed here around 1802. The well-known Cumbrian author, Melvyn Bragg, wrote a novel about it, *The Maid of Buttermere*, which was later made into a play that was very successfully performed at the Theatre by the Lake. Thomas Gray, scholar and poet famous for his *Elegy*, stayed here for six days in 1769.

Now re-trace your steps back towards the George Hotel and turn left into Station Street and left again after Costa Coffee to enter a shop called Poets' Interiors. Formerly a part of the Royal Oak Hotel, it was known for a time as the Poets' Dining Room. This was another famous venue for the literary figures, Southey, Coleridge, Wordsworth, Shelley and Walter Scott. Here, it is possible to see stained-glass window images of



Hall Cain

Southey, S.T. Coleridge, Hartley Coleridge, Ruskin and De Quincey. If they can't be seen from inside, then walk into New Street to view the windows. It is also known that Tennyson and Robert Louis Stevenson were hosted at the Royal Oak, and it was there that Ruskin spent part of his honeymoon with Effie Gray. Cross the road by the pedestrian crossing and walk down Station Road to Keswick Museum. Here, you will find Southey's chair and desk with family manuscripts along with those of Wordsworth,

Coleridge, De Quincey, Eliza Lynn Linton, Hall Cain and John Richardson. There's also a Ruskin watercolour, his dress coat and shoes. From the museum, enter the park and walk alongside the River Greta, which is also the title of a poem by Wordsworth. You will also see excellent views of Skiddaw, at 3,054 feet, England's fourth highest mountain. Ruskin's first publication was a poem *On Skiddaw and Derwentwater*. On August 15th 1815, Wordsworth and Southey climbed Skiddaw to celebrate the victory at Waterloo. They ate roast beef and plum pudding, but Wordsworth kicked over a kettle of water by accident so they drank undiluted rum punch. Thomas Gray was so overwhelmed when viewing Skiddaw he fell over backwards. Keats climbed Skiddaw in 1818, and, as it got colder, he drank two glasses of rum ascending and one returning.



Mention must be made of Old Windebrowe, which lies on Brundholme Road, a minor road to Threlkeld, and is now about to open as a school for children with special educational needs. Raisley and William Calvert, school friends of Wordsworth, owned the estate and allowed him and Dorothy to live there for six weeks in 1794. When Raisley died, he left

a legacy of £900 to Wordsworth, rendering him independent for life because he had provided a spiritual help during Raisley's illness.

In 1803, Raisley Calvert had offered Wordsworth a home called The Ghyll, at Applethwaite, so that the poet could be near to Coleridge, but the offer was declined since Wordsworth realised Coleridge wouldn't stay. However, Raisley insisted Wordsworth keep the house and lands and benefit from the rents.

Still following the river, exit the park and turn right on to Crosthwaite Road. Bristowe Hill, now a private residence, is uphill to your left. In 1978, a poetry reading was given here by Norman Nicholson, the most famous of recent Cumbrian poets. He was awarded the Queen's Gold Medal for poetry in 1977.

Go past the Pheasant Inn and turn left onto Vicarage Hill. On your left before the hill descends, the old Crosthwaite Vicarage was the home of Eliza Lynn Linton, novelist and feminist. Later, Cannon H D Rawnsley lived there, with the current resident being Philippa Harrison, who has recently written an excellent book of the area called *Mountain Republic*.

At the bottom of the hill on the right is Church Lane. Having come to the Keswick Convention In 1912, Wilfred Owen camped in the nearby field, climbed Latrigg and enjoyed views from Castlehead and Friar's Crag. If you look along Church Lane, you will see Crosthwaite Church, where the graves of Southey and Rawnsley are to be found. Both are easily signposted, and Southey's was funded by the Brazilian Government.



Christopher Pilling

1936-2019

Turn left along High Hill towards the town. A group of published Cumbrian poets hosted by Christopher Pilling had met at No 25 for about 30 years until quite recently. They produced an anthology titled *The New Lake Poets*.

On your left, the old Pencil Mill provided essential writing tools to writers and poets to save them from carrying ink bottles.

The Keswick School of Industrial Arts was located on your right immediately before Greta Bridge. It was founded in 1814 by Canon Rawnsley and his wife Edith to provide meaningful winter employment for local labourers, alleviate poverty and promote the Arts and Crafts movement. Cross the bridge and



Robert Southey

go left through the car parks, and, at the top of the hill, you will see Greta Hall, now privately owned. Please respect the owner's privacy. Between 1800 and 1804, Greta Hall was the residence of Coleridge, who wrote *Christabel Part 2*, *The Keepsake*, *The Picture* and *Dejection*. Southey lived there from 1803 until his death in 1843, becoming Poet

Laureate in 1813. The most famous of the works he wrote

were *The History of Brazil*, *The Three Bears* (with no Goldilocks), *Ode to the Russian Emperor*, *The Cataract of Lodore* and *The Pig*. Visitors to the house included Wordsworth and family, Byron, Shelley, Keats, Sir Walter Scott, Ruskin, Charles and Mary Lamb, De Quincey, William Haslitt, William Wilberforce, Mrs Gaskell, Harriet Martineau and Sir Humphrey Davey.



Southey's Study at Greta Hall painted by Caroline Bowles, Southey's second wife.

Walk down the drive towards Main Street, where the walk ends.

Here are some other interesting literary figures who lived in the Keswick area, but the scope of this booklet allows us only

to whet your appetite, and we leave it up to you to explore the subject further yourself.

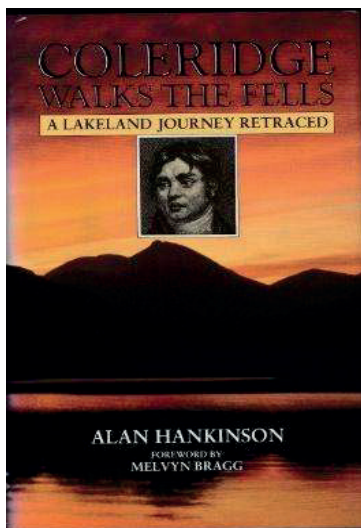


Shelley Cottage

Shelley lived at Chestnut Hill for three months in the early 19th century at the rent of 30 shillings a week. He came to join the Lakes Poets but found Southey dull. Neighbours became suspicious when Shelley began to experiment with chemicals. He departed leaving debts.

George Bott lived in Penrith Road. He wrote *Keswick – The Story of a Lake District Town*, published in 1994. He reviewed books in the Keswick Reminder every week and gave many lectures on local history and literature.

Alan Hankinson, a journalist specialising in obituaries for ITV and an author of climbing books *The First Tigers*, *Geoffrey Winthrop Young*, *Coleridge Walks the Fells*, as well as of *The*



History of the Blue Box, lived in Skiddaw Street until his death in 2007

Bob Langley lived in Springs Road from 1980 until 2004. He was a television presenter best known for *Pebble Mill at One*. He also wrote adventure books, of which the best known are *Traverse of the Gods*, *The Churchill Diamonds* and *Falklands Gambit*. But before that, the author

Robert Neill, who wrote *Mist over Pendle*, lived there from 1958 until his death in 1979.

Sir Thomas Henry Hall Cain lived at the Hawthorns from 1888 to 1892. He wrote two novels with a Cumbrian background. His book *The Shadow of Crime* was a successful starter for the Heinemann Press. A friend of the artist Rossetti, he stayed with him at Fisher Place, Thirlmere, to help him over problems with drug dependency.

W H Auden, the poet whose parents owned a holiday home at Far Wescoe, Threlkeld, visited often in the 1920s and 1930s, working on manuscripts. Christopher Isherwood accompanied him on occasion, as did Cecil Day Lewis.

Mirehouse, which lies on the A591 on the road to Carlisle, is home of the Spedding family and is open to the public. In 1835, Tennyson was hosted there, working on *Morte D'Arthur* and *the Daydream*. Also visiting at the same time was Edward

Fitzgerald, author of *The Rubyat of Omar Khayam*, and the two became friends.



Mirehouse

THE BUILDING STONES OF KESWICK - Alan Smith

This is a circular walk of approximately 2 kms around the streets of Keswick to view the building stones. The area around Keswick has a rich variety of rocks, some of which provided good building stone. The best materials were found in the volcanic rocks south of the town (The Borrowdale Volcanic Group (BVG) which are lavas and ashes (tuffs), and the Lakeland Green Slates. Freestones on the other hand, had to be imported (the Red Permo-Triassic sandstones and the Carboniferous sandstones). The town is built over a group of glacial drumlins (mounds of glacial clays), so no bedrock is visible in the immediate town area.

Start in the town centre in the Market Square.

The Moot Hall. The present structure dates from 1831. As you look at the building, particularly its sides, it is immediately obvious that it is made up of a great variety of materials of different size, shape and composition – a classic building of ‘gathered’ stone. The plaque to the left of the steps at the end of the building informs us that, “... when it was rebuilt in 1831, the clock, bell and materials were from Lord’s Island on Derwent Water”. If this is true, we are clearly dealing with material reused from a previous building, because Lord’s Island is a glacial drumlin feature in the lake, with no sources of bedrock. The prominent, quoins running up the tower end of the building are difficult to decipher, but are gently ribbed blocks of a Carboniferous sandstone. The steps have treads of large slabs of the Permo-Triassic Penrith Sandstone. In the side walls (Picture 1), there are massive pieces of the grey-green Borrowdale Volcanic Group (BVG) tuffs, set vertically on edge. The rest of the walling is a motley mixture of pieces of tuffs and lavas, rounded cobbles (mostly BVG material), some of

them knapped to produce flat faces, and even pebbles. There are also some small slivers of black slaty pieces of Skiddaw Group material (mudstones and siltstones), used to level up courses and fill small spaces. There are a few pieces of a dark, purple/plum-red coloured material – this is a breccia at the base of the BVG sequences where it rests on the Skiddaw Group rocks around Cat Ghyll (NY 270208) which is on the eastern shore of Derwent Water (PB in picture). Over the windows, the arches are formed of flat slabs of an eclectic mixture of tuffs and a few pieces of the red Penrith Sandstone. (PS in picture).



Picture 1. Side wall of the Moot Hall
BVG - Borrowdale Volcanic tuff on edge
PB - Purple Breccia
PS - Penrith Sandstone

In the top area of the Market Place, you will see the large former Barclays Bank building in the far corner (now mont-bell and The Bath House shop in the other. Both of these demonstrate the common combination of Permo-Triassic red

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sandstones and Lakeland Green Slate. The sandstone here is the relatively fine-grained St Bees Sandstone, which is used for the quoins, window dressings and where there was a need for decoration, the flat Green Slate slabs being used for the walling. Note particularly how the size and quality of the Green Slate decreases as you move to the upper floors and on the sides of the building. In contrast to these two buildings, next but one is Seasalt (formerly HSBC Bank), where a buff Carboniferous sandstone was used for the imposing frontage.

Gradually move down the Market Square and pause just beyond the Moot Hall. Looking at the properties on either side, it is very apparent that most of the buildings are completely rendered over and painted, making it difficult to see what they are constructed of. This is the original core area of Keswick. Early maps from before 1850 show tightly packed properties here, with yards and housing running back on both sides from narrow Market Square frontages. Some of the early fabric is still here; for example on the right, in the narrow passageway between Sweet Temptations and The Golden Lion public house, you will see boulders and cobbles derived from the local glacial clays forming the foundations of the walling. The four-storey Inn on The Square is a good example of Victorian building using neatly mortared cut tuff material, but with light brown Carboniferous sandstone in the string courses and windowsills. Turned volcanic tuff lintels adorn the upper floors. Again, the side walls show Green Slate of a slightly inferior quality.

The paving over the whole of the Market Square was redone in 2003. The red/brown pavement areas are a 'porphyry' (actually, a volcanic ignimbrite, the product of a pyroclastic flow) from the Trento-Alto Adige region in Northern Italy. The

greyish sandstone blocks come from Whinney Hill quarry in Accrington, Lancashire (Namurian, Haslingden Flags), and the long fine-grained grey granite kerbstones are a Chinese import. The seating, perhaps more in keeping with Keswick, is made of the local Green Slate tuffs.

Keeping to the right, move further down the Market Square and pause close to the pedestrian crossing. The Town Council Offices on the corner (a former bank, hence Bank Street) shows precisely cut masonry of BVG fine to medium-grained tuffs and lavas, the blocks being noticeably not cleaved, hence their solid look. The faces have been left rough-cast. The quoins, windowsills and surrounds are a buff Carboniferous sandstone, with sandstone blocks at the eaves. On the opposite corner is the former Post Office in the green BVG tuff material, but again with Carboniferous sandstone quoins. Glancing down Bank Street, you see the former Magistrates Court building (now Wetherspoons) – finely constructed in BVG tuff and St Bees Sandstone.

Continue down Main Street on the right-hand side and glance up Stanger Street (first road on the right) which is lined with Victorian villas. You will see the ground rises up quite steeply towards the end as it goes up onto the side of a glacial drumlin (more of this later).

Just past the mini traffic island at the end of the car park of the Lakes and Dales Coop you will see the Crosthwaite Parish Room. This is a good place to look at and appreciate the Lakeland Green Slate – the volcanoclastic tuffs from the Borrowdale Volcanic Group that we have seen already in several buildings. This is an ornate building, gable end to the road, with a plaque above the door with a difficult-to-read datestone of 1879. The tuff slabs are characteristically laid

fairly dry with minimal mortaring at the back. The slabs are split along the cleavage and many show brown pyrite staining. There is a fine decorative doorway worked in large pieces of the tuff, which is clearly fragmental. The windowsills and gateposts are also large slabs of tuff. There are no significant quoins at the corners but the flat slabs simply interlock. The steps are a buff sandstone.

Proceed further down Main Street. On the right, just past the car park entrance and before you reach the bridge, look at the three terraced cottages – Nos 94/96/98 Main St. Here once again we see 'gathered' local materials in the walling, irregular cobbles and blocks of BVG. There are some good examples of the basal purple breccia material we saw in the Moot Hall – look to the right of the doorways at 94 and 96. Directly opposite across the road is The Retro Zone Museum where red Permo-Triassic sandstone quoins are very obvious. The substantial walling blocks (up to 15-16 cms thick) are what is known locally as Castlehead Diorite. If you look carefully at the blocks, some contain veins of calcite. Look at the extreme right-hand end of the wall, where there is diagonal veining in the blocks. We will encounter and explain this diorite later in the walk.

Go over the bridge keeping on the right alongside the long wall (recently reinforced as flood defences). At the bridge, the wall is made of river cobbles, thin pieces of tuff and some occasional red sandstone capstones. As you proceed, the walling becomes squared masonry of the Threlkeld Microgranite – it is best appreciated at the far end, where there is a drinking fountain (BVG tuff) set into the wall. The microgranite is a grey, fine-grained material. It comes from two main outcrops near Threlkeld, about 6kms east of Keswick

Look across to the houses on the opposite side of the road. The tall villas at No's 7-12, St Kentigern Terrace, 1893, are classic examples of Victorian Keswick, with walling in the Green Slate with Permo-Triassic sandstone around the doors and windows. To the left are four much older cottages, No's 3-6, all completely rendered over and painted white. These are some of the few 17th century buildings left in Keswick – probably built with 'gathered' stone. Some nice orthostats of large tuff slabs form the low walling to the front gardens. You will have noticed that the relatively new Premier Inn building on this side of the road was, fortunately, forced to use local green slate to be in keeping with Keswick buildings. The next building on the right-hand side, standing on the corner of Crosthwaite Road, is the St Herbert's Centre (formerly Crosthwaite Sunday School), built 1833. It is a classic example of a building which, like the Moot Hall, is constructed of whatever stone could be gathered together locally – cobbles, rough blocks with knapped faces, thin fragments of black Skiddaw Group mudstones and slates, pieces of cleaved tuffs, pieces of quartz and, again, lumps of the purple basal BVG breccia (Picture 2). At the right-hand end, between the two windows, you will see a large piece of the porphyritic microgranite (M) from the Armboth dyke, which intrudes the fellsides on the western side of the Thirlmere valley (NY 300165). It is a pinkish rock with phenocrysts (large crystals) of transparent quartz and pink orthoclase feldspar. The ground mass is a fine grey-pinky shade, which weathers to a lighter salmon-pink. There is another piece of this rock between the two windows at the other end of the building at a lower level. The building also has Penrith Sandstone around the windows, in the archway above the doors and in the buttresses at the corner.



*Picture 2. St Herbert's Centre
M - Armboth dyke microgranite*

Before you leave here, just glance across the road. The terrace overlooking the junction (Nos 19-22) has very neatly machine-cut blocks of the Green Slate, some of the blocks with machined faces, and all having being laid dry. The sandstones around the doorways and windows are again painted. No 18 has BVG material 'tile hanging', a relatively unusual feature in Keswick. Cross the junction and go to the prominent Church of Our Lady of the Lakes and St Charles. This is the only significant building in Keswick built entirely of the Threlkeld Microgranite. The blocks are roughly cut, with irregular faces, not all entirely shaped with 90° angled faces. The stonework is neatly mortared and gives a very blocky appearance. The quoins are slightly more regular but retain rough faces. The



Picture 3. Our Lady of the Lakes and St Charles Church showing detail of the Threlkeld Microgranite walling material.

church was opened in 1928 but was not finished until 1965. This microgranite was clearly not an easy stone to work, and perhaps this is why little of it is seen in Keswick, despite its

proximity to the town. The quarries at Threlkeld primarily produced railway ballast and aggregates.

Walk up Crosthwaite Road, keeping on the right by the tall flood wall. Take the first right, through the flood gates, on to the riverside footpath in Lower Fitz Park. You are now entering the classic Victorian quarter of Keswick, created after the coming of the railway to the town in 1865. Glance across to the left beyond the football field to the local hospital. This is a typical Victorian Keswick building, again in the green slate with Penrith Sandstone window surrounds, quoins and dressings. Built in 1891, it has the classic steeply pitched roof with local green slate roofing, prominent chimneys and red ridge tiles. Fortunately, the new extension on the right has been built in a matching style and with similar materials.

As you walk along the riverside path, the steep slopes across the river are the other side of the drumlin that was observed up Stanger Street. As you reach the end of this part of the Park, slant across to the left and exit on to Station Road at the gates by Keswick Museum and Art Gallery. Constructed in 1897, this building is another piece of polite Victorian architecture. It is a quality building with cut green slate blocks, laid dry, with Penrith Sandstone dressings and walling and cut quoins to the end elevations. Go left and walk up to the approach to the former railway station. Once more, we have precisely cut green slate blocks, but with buff Carboniferous sandstone quoins and door frames and ashlar blocks in the massive chimneys. Alongside the station is the huge building of the Keswick Hotel (1869) – a classic ‘railway hotel’, designed, by the same architect as the station. The size of the green slate blocks in the walling is again striking, but the Permo-Triassic sandstone dressings are equally prominent. It is difficult to pin

these down to location, for they noticeably have distinctive iron nodules in them. At the very elaborate doorway, we have some fine Ross of Mull red granite pillars.

Make your way back down Station Road, which divides the two parts of Fitz Park. Cross the bridge, and at the end in the gardens on the left is the war memorial – a rather out-of-place piece of Portland Stone, clearly an ‘off-the-peg’ addition to the Keswick stonework. On the right-hand side of the road is a terrace of eight huge Victorian villas. The architecture here is again polite but quite involved. The green slate walling is dressed with buff Carboniferous sandstones in the lintels, jambs and dressings. Welsh roofing slates are seen in the middle part of the block, and the elaborate garden walls have shaped green slate blocks, ashlar sandstones and thin tuff slabs.

Go across the pedestrian crossing just a short way into Station Street. Three prominent villas (Nos 27, 29, 31) are on the right. Again, we are looking at ornate confections of green slate, buff Carboniferous sandstones, granite pillars, ornate gateposts decorated with quartz inlays and, at No 27, a curious ‘grotto’ decorated with mineral specimens. Contrast all of this with the low, squat shop building opposite (Lakeland Retreats), where we have bare walls of locally collected cobbles. Looking further down the street, the tall parade of shops ‘Grandy Nook’, 1891, brings us back to Victorian Keswick.

From here, go left across into Southey Street. You are going into the residential Victorian quarter, with prominent villas and terraces laid out on a grid-iron plan. Note the remaining granite kerbstones all along this street. They are probably from Southern Scotland and have a brownish look. No’s 2 and 4 Southey St, the small cottages on the right, have walls of the

Castlehead diorite. Next is Keswick Methodist Church, 1893. In this building there are some very finely cut blocks of the green slate, with some very large, precisely cut ones in the main frontage. Buff Carboniferous sandstones form the window surrounds and the quoins and the decorative string coursing. Some of the tuff blocks shown pyrite staining. There are also some very nice granite pillars. These are Peterhead red granite, and the exterior ones show small 'heathens' (black spots) (1-2cms). If the church is open you will be able to see that the larger pillars just inside have some huge heathen inclusions several centimetres long. Opposite the church, the three-storey building on the corner (No 3) is interesting in that it is entirely in the green slate, with no sandstone dressings or quoins. The result is a rather severe exterior. Contrast it with the more ornate villas further down. Continue down Southey Street, noting the variety of Victorian villas - practically all in green slate with varying amounts of sandstone ornamentation. Blocks of quartz decorate many of the garden wall tops. The Edwardene on the right-hand side has a fine set of steps in what is known locally as 'rainspot slates' (best seen when wet). These are slabs of the BVG tuff from the Quayfoot quarries near Grange-in-Borrowdale. The material is fragmental, the darker particles giving the appearance of a 'spotted' green slate (nothing to do with rainspotting). The more modern house at No 28 has some very carefully cut tuff blocks in the walling. The four dormer bungalows at Nos 30-36 have chunky slabs of Penrith Sandstone on the tops of the garden walls – if the weather is sunny, the glinting quartz on the sand grains is the give-away feature of this material. Turn right and go up into Church Street. Head for the church at the end and go up into the elevated churchyard. Here, you are surrounded by a very interesting group of buildings. From the

churchyard, you will see diagonally across on the corner of Church Street and St John's Street the former Battersby Hall with its plaque 'Keswick Library 1840'. Opposite and immediately on your left is the old St John's School, 1840. Later, you will see other buildings next to them in St John's Street. At the other end of the churchyard standing below in the trees is Bishop's House (the home of the Bishop of Carlisle). We know a great deal about this building, as the building specifications still exist. It is built of the Castlehead diorite. A quarry in the outcrop of this rock, a short distance down a track SE from here, was opened specially in 1838 to build this – the then new vicarage for the church, which had just been constructed. The diorite was then also used to build the Battersby Hall, the School and a tight group of adjoining buildings. The rock is a very dark, blocky material and extremely hard. We have already met this at The Retro Zone Museum and noted it at Nos 2 and 3 Southey Street. The quarry had a short working life, once this group of buildings was finished it was closed. The handful of other outlying properties in the town where this rock can be seen appears to be reusing the original supply. From this elevated part of the churchyard, you will also see the substantial Victorian terrace opposite in St John's Street. It is interesting to compare the materials in these buildings. There is a lot of Castlehead diorite in the walls of the Cumbria Hotel at the extreme left. The middle of the block (Chaucer House, now apartments) has green slate walling in irregular sizes, with thin slabs on the window tops. To the right and set back a little, Nos 6, 7 and 8 have green slate material and sandstone quoins and even some slate hanging. Greystones at the right-hand end has high quality green slate, neatly laid with large, shaped door jambs and window surrounds. St John's Church was built in 1838 for

John Marshall, a Leeds manufacturer and landowner in the Lake District. It is largely made of a dullish pink/grey Lower Carboniferous sandstone from a quarry at Lamonby (NY 412362) NE of Keswick. In 1862 and 1882 aisles were added in a slightly redder sandstone. From the church, go back into St John's Street. Here, you can get a clear view of the Battersby Hall and the adjoining Verger's Cottage. Both are sturdy and rather sombre buildings. Note the nicely shaped lintels and stonework around the windows and the rounded chimneys. Verger's Cottage has striking drip mould features over the window tops.



Picture 4. St John's Church - dullish pink/grey Lower Carboniferous sandstone.



*Picture 5. Wall of St John's School
D - Section across a hexagonal column of diorite*

The diorite (D) can be viewed close up in the walls of the school opposite (Picture 5). The substantial blocks have small pieces of tuff to level up courses. Carboniferous sandstone and BVG tuff materials have been used around the windows. The alms houses adjoining the school have tuff material nicely worked in the door lintels.

Then turn left into High Street. On the left, the old Bethesda Free Chapel (now a house) has irregular pieces of diorite in its walls and massive quoins. Facing down High Street at the end is a large villa, 'The Hollies', built in 1846 again in the diorite. Go right down The Seams and then left down Derwent Street. All of these small pre-1850 terraced cottages are of gathered rubblestone and heavily rendered. At the end of Derwent Street standing at the corner of Lake Road/Borrowdale Road is George Fisher's, one of the renowned Keswick 'outdoor' shops.



Picture 6. The former St John's School, St John's Street. Walling of Castlehead Diorite and roofing in Lakeland Greenslate with graduated coursing.

It is an imposing, complex Victorian building in neat green slate with buff sandstones around the windows, polished pillars of tuff complete with capitals and hanging slates on the side walls of the tower feature.

The walk is now almost complete. Lake Road has recently been paved in St Bees Sandstone. The buildings between here and the Market Square on the pedestrianised part of Lake Road repeat most of the building styles and material combinations we have already met. The green slate tuff walling dominates, Carboniferous sandstones abound, and the ornate work of the Victorian architects is everywhere around. You complete the walk by returning to the Market Square.

KESWICK ROADSIDE HERITAGE WALK Bill Richardson

This walk is in two loops.

The aim of this walk is to point out not only the heritage but also the way the road layout has developed over the centuries.

Loop One. 1.8 miles with 92 feet of elevation gain.

Start at Moot Hall in the town centre. Walk around the Moot Hall. Keswick has long been a transport hub. Two roads head southwards. By the Chip Shop, Lake Road leads to Borrowdale Road, which itself proceeds to Honister and Styhead Passes. By the Royal Oak, St John's Street leads to Ambleside Road, which then becomes Manor Brow, which itself leads to the A591 higher up. The A591 – one of the most scenic road routes in England – proceeds towards Kendal over the pass of Dunmail Raise. To the north, the road heads towards Wigton and Carlisle and, to the west, to Cockermouth and Workington, with an offshoot over Whinlatter Pass. In medieval times, it was not uncommon for markets to develop on road junctions such as this. The Y shaped road pattern can be seen clearly on the earliest maps.

The Moot Hall steps appear to be the zero point of several sets of milestones that converge on the town. Just above the bottom step is an up arrow with a horizontal line on top carved into the stone work. This is a Carved Ordnance Survey Benchmark, accurately recording height. Extremely common nationwide, such survey marks are usually found on the roadside – often on the corners of prominent buildings. Keep your eyes open, and you will see others as you go along.

Walk down hill to the pedestrian crossing. The building on the right is the former post office. Up to the 1970s, the post office

corner was a notorious traffic chokepoint where the north-south and east-west routes converge. Immediately around the corner at knee height is a small gunmetal plate. This is an Ordnance Survey flush bracket benchmark. The serial number 203S shows it to date from the early 20th century. Brackets on the surveying equipment slot into the plate so that it sits flush to the wall, giving even greater accuracy than the benchmark



The legendary Paddy Morris directs traffic at Post Office Corner, 1970s

already seen. Go over the crossing and continue along Lower Main Street. The Silk Road Takeaway occupies the site of our benefactor's, George Luckman's, haberdashery shop. Continue to Greta Bridge, which was rebuilt by Cumberland CC in 1926. There has been a bridge around here since before 1687. Note the wild meander in the river and flood protection walls to the north. In the past, the river course was dynamic.

This area is prone to flooding, and any bridge here is vulnerable.

Continue along the road now called High Hill. Several interesting older houses face the river. Lakeland View is a former toll house, and that's where the roads to the north and west divide. Note the bay window allowing the gatekeeper to see traffic approaching from all directions. Opposite the toll house is a Samuel Ladyman drinking fountain, one of the four placed by the Keswick philanthropist Samuel Ladyman c1875.

At the old school, turn right on to Crosthwaite Rd. It was formerly known as Wigton Road, though a direct route to Wigton is hard to trace today. To your left against a hedge, a metal sign signposts the footpath to Applethwaite and Milbeck. It is of an unusual and robust design, and, along the route, there are three or four similar others, probably dating to before 1920. Follow the road past the hospital to the next junction. In the grass triangle at the junction is an unusual old guide post indicating Railway Station, Latrigg and Skiddaw and Brundholme. It has been recently restored. A close look will reveal that pointers both ways along Crosthwaite Rd have been removed. The name CUMBERLAND can be seen low down on the post. Further down Crosthwaite Road can be seen two old buildings: The Pheasant, a former coaching inn, and, over the road, a former filling station which had replaced stables and which is now a cafe.

According to very early maps, Brundholme Road may be an original route to Penrith. No longer open to vehicles all the way, the road went to Threlkeld without ever crossing a major river. Turn right and follow Briar Rigg towards Brundholme, initially via a footpath separated from the road, then back alongside the road past the abutments of the bridge that

carried the railway to Cockermouth. Continue uphill past Spooney Green Lane on the left. Peter Crosthwaite was an early-19th century tourism entrepreneur. He may have laid out or improved the lane as a carriage route to the top of Latrigg. It would also join up with ancient routes passing behind Latrigg and is the way to Skiddaw. Victorian maps show a guide post at this junction.

Continue on until the end of the footway. Cross the road to use a footpath separate from, but running alongside, the road. On the left was Keswick Golf Club. A sign at the entrance had the name Keswick painted out in 1940 to confuse any German invaders. Later commandeered for tank training, the course never reopened. The sign was preserved and is now proudly displayed in the new clubhouse at Threlkeld Hall.



The pre 1940 Golf Club sign with Keswick blacked out

After a short distance towards Windebrowe, Brundholme Road bears left. Cross this road and continue along the

footpath. After 100 yards, there are steps down to a mini roundabout. To the left is the old railway station. Ahead, the leisure centre is on the site of the old goods yard. Cross the road and walk past the leisure centre, then downhill. At the start of the railings on the right as you rejoin the road is a boundary stone marking the extent of property owned by Cockermouth, Keswick & Penrith Railway Company. Railway boundary markers are quite common.

Walk past the museum and turn right into the park, then left towards the River Greta, where you will turn left under Silver Bridge. As you look back, those with good eyesight will make out the Railway Company crest at the top of the arch, which was built in the 1860s. There is no record of a crossing of the Greta here before this.

Walk over the footbridge just ahead and turn right.

The Three-Bears Bus Shelter displays 3D artwork and an interpretation board. It also houses a pump. It was built in 2021 following storm Desmond as part of the town's flood alleviation scheme.

This is also part of Loop Two. Continue straight ahead, using the pelican crossing at the junction. Continue ahead along Station Street. Turn right at Standish Street, then left into Packhorse Court and towards the Packhorse Inn. A slate interpretation board explains the history of this area.

Continue through the court to the start at the Moot Hall.

Loop Two. Three miles, 350 feet of elevation gain

Start at the Moot Hall and walk through Packhorse Court. There is an interpretation board at the far end.

Turn right uphill, then left along Station St. At the junction, use the pelican crossing, turn right and cross the side road to the war memorial. You will see a bus shelter ahead.

Built to replace a pre-existing shelter following Storm Desmond in 2015 its completion was delayed by the covid lockdown until 2021. It houses a pump to alleviate flooding along Penrith Road. The 3D painting of the Three Bears by Paul Wilmott is a tribute to Robert Southey. From here the 555 service to Lancaster claims to be the most scenic bus route in England.



Bus stop shelter featuring the Three Bears picture

Continue east along Penrith Road. In the past, this area was the location of several water mills. Several becks flow through

culverts into the River Greta along this stretch, which, prior to more modern civil engineering techniques, would not be suitable for a primary route. It is still prone to flooding, hence the pump at the bus shelter. As you pass the fire station on your right, note the outflow of Cuddy Beck into the Greta to your left.

The old toll house was on the Keswick-to-Penrith turnpike. The present owner does not know if there was ever a bow window allowing the toll keeper to see both ways. There is an interpretation board on the adjacent Calvert Bridge. This locality is known as Brigham. It is probable that, before the current structure, there was a crossing here which would link up with Brundholme Road to the north of the Greta.

There is a Victorian post box on the right in the gable end of Brigham Row near to the Twa Dogs Pub. As you continue along Penrith Road, note the side road on the left by Travis Perkins. This leads to The Forge, in Tudor times the site of nationally important heavy Industry. Continue to the junction with the A591 and bear left towards Penrith. A few yards up the hill set low down in a wall, and thus easily missed, is a milestone stating Keswick 1 Penrith 17. It is on the course of the newer turnpike, probably original and dating from the 1820s. At this point, the original turnpike bears right towards Castlerigg Stone Circle. Continue another few yards to a row of newer houses. Behind The Hawthorns Street name plate, there is a Keswick Local Board District Boundary Stone. The local administration was taken over from the Parish by this board in 1853 before it was replaced by Keswick UDC in 1894. Unusually, the name of the adjacent Board or Parish is not marked on the other side.

Return to the A591 junction. THIS IS A DANGEROUS CROSSING, so take care. You need to cross via the islands to go up Chestnut Hill towards Windermere. After 220 yards, just past The Auld Barn, notice a gap in the line of buildings. This is the



The imposing facade of Chestnut Hill House

probable course of an old road. You will be able to see an elegant slate-fronted house, which would almost certainly have faced the original road. Compare it with the functional 'back' of the house, which faces the present road.

Continue up the hill to the Manor Brow junction. Lots to see here. The guide post has a Cumberland CC halo finial, and, if you look closely at the post, you will find Nichols Pump Co Northallerton embossed. The pedestal is fluted. This combination of features is unusual, but there are similar others in the area. Old pictures show there was once a guide post on the other side of the road. Ambleside Road was once the primary route into Keswick. You can make out the former junction layout from old kerb stones. This made the turn sharper but less steep than it is today.

Over the years, the toll house has been enlarged. Note the bay window allowing the gate keeper to see down towards Keswick and up towards Ambleside – but, interestingly, not down Chestnut Hill. There appears to be a bricked-up arched window, which was, in fact, an alcove where the list of tolls was displayed. Up to the 1960s, the A591 was extensively engineered and is the modern way into, and out of, Keswick.

Continue up the hill for 100 yards to the Castlerigg milepost low down in the hedge, again easily missed. It is situated exactly one mile from Keswick's Moot Hall steps via Ambleside Road and probably dates from the 1820s. Made from cast iron, it is of a different design from the Penrith milestone. It was repainted in 2024.

Continue up the hill for another 150 yards to a low wall on your right. Look over the wall to see a deep ghyll, over 20 feet from the road to beck level. This is Cuddy Beck, the same one we crossed at the fire station. The culvert is a considerable feat of engineering, carrying the turnpike over an obstacle that had been impassable to wheeled carriages.

Looking uphill, note that the road bears left. An early route into Keswick followed the line of this bend diagonally across the field to your right to the tree line.

The trees are on private property. It has been suggested that a Roman Road ran the topside of Cuddy Beck to Keswick through the woods. There are certainly unusual features on the ground there. Retrace your steps back to the junction and turn left into Manor Brow. Alongside the toll house is another Samuel Ladyman drinking fountain. Continue downhill to Lakeland Park, where you will find another Cuddy Beck culvert. On the top of the wall on the left close to the lamp post, there is a stud OS benchmark, which is uncommon and which probably dates from the 1930s. They were used only where there was nowhere vertical suitable. If you look closely, you will see that it is engraved.

Looking back up Cuddy Beck, you will see a gateway into the woods, which is the line of an earlier route to Ambleside and the possible Roman Road. Those routes do not cross Cuddy Beck at all. Carefully cross the road and look over the wall to observe that the beck was still a considerable obstacle.



Inscribed stud benchmark Lakeland Park



Cuddy Beck culvert underneath the A591 at Lonsties

Continue towards Keswick, slightly uphill. Note the grass bank that runs along the front of the large houses set back from the road. Could this be the remains of the Roman agger? Or has the road surface been lowered to ease the gradient? At Castlerigg Manor look back, and you may be able to see traffic and street lamps at the bend in the A591 we noted earlier. The alignment is clear. Turnpike engineers have put in a zig zag down from here. The footpath follows the direct route, and the bollards were painted white with a gold top by a local to celebrate the coronation of King Charles III.



1920s roadworks on Manor Brow. Only Borrowdale is decipherable on the guidepost that is pointing down Springs Road.

Where the road levels out, Springs Road on the left was another ancient route towards Dunmail Raise and Ambleside via Castlerigg Hall. As recently as the 1920s, there was a guide post here, but nowadays there is no through road for wheeled vehicles.

Follow what has now become Ambleside Road towards Keswick, which in turn leads to St John's Street. Opposite the old school in St John's Street are the remains of a road sign topped by a red triangle, (recently damaged and replaced) and, at the junction with Derwent Street, there is an old direction sign to Borrowdale. Both are the survivors from before the Road Signs Regulation Act of 1963.



The B5289 Keswick to Lorton Road is one of the steepest in England, 1 in 4 over Honister Pass.

Just before the George Hotel, an arched alley is named Miners Way, which is believed to be the original route to The Forge, well away from the River Greta.

Continue along St John's Street back to The Moot Hall.



Castlerigg milestone before, during and after restoration by the author 2024



Derwentwater from Friars Crag.

See pages 5 and 6.

Panoramic photo by Tony Marsh.

The u3a (formerly the University of the Third Age) is a UK-wide, voluntary, non-religious, and non-political network of local groups for people no longer in full-time employment, offering opportunities to learn, socialize, and share skills. It focuses on "lifelong learning for pleasure," with no exams or qualifications, featuring over 1,000 branches and 400,000+ members.