

Ravenglass - The Curlew's Tale

The Wild Woodlands

would have spread for miles over the surrounding countryside. Bears and wolves would have roamed free and golden eagles would have soared above. The forest trail from here is still full of amazing creatures. Look out for greater spotted woodpeckers, buzzards and tawny owls in the trees above.



Eskmeals firing range

As you are walking along the shore you might hear a very loud booming sound like cannons being fired. This is the testing of large-calibre ammunition, firing over 45km out to sea in some cases.



Mudlarking

Can you see worm holes and casts on the shore? Beneath the mud and sand there are amazing creatures hiding like the 30cm-long lugworms, frilly ragworms and beautiful razor clams. Curlews use their long, curved beaks to pick them out... what a lovely snack!



The Main Street

Is narrower at both ends, can you see? This helped to enclose the animals brought here to market. It also helped protect the locals from attack. Look at the names of the houses, they can give you clues about the village history and wildlife, for example Drapers, Dunlin and Clanoventa.



Can you spot the old market cross? In the 1200s Ravenglass was granted a charter to hold a market and fair on St James' Day. There was a grand cross in the middle of the street but a lovely plaque marks the spot now.



Can you spot the wooden posts of the ancient fish trap?

This was used for centuries and up until quite recently to catch salmon. Fish swam upstream with the incoming tide, then a gate would shut to trap them as the tide went back out. The fish were then caught with huge nets, sometimes more than fifty at a time. The fish would have been sold at market and eaten in local hotels and at Muncaster Castle. (Thanks to Neil Robson)



The Roman Vicus

Imagine standing there 2,000 years ago when the Roman vicus (town) would have been really busy! Close your eyes and imagine smelling baking bread and fish being smoked, seeing steam rising from the bath house and watching the wheat fields wave in the sea breeze, hearing blacksmiths clanking metal and feeling the hustle and bustle of families living and working here.



Wonderful wildlife

If you are lucky you might spot an otter near the mouth of the River Esk! There are also bright white egrets and herons hunting at the edges of the tide, waders such as ringed plovers, curlews and oystercatchers searching for worms in the mud and bright red-billed shelducks sailing the seas.

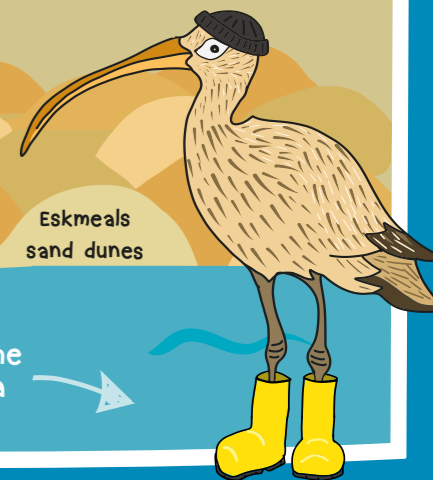


Beachcombing is always fun...

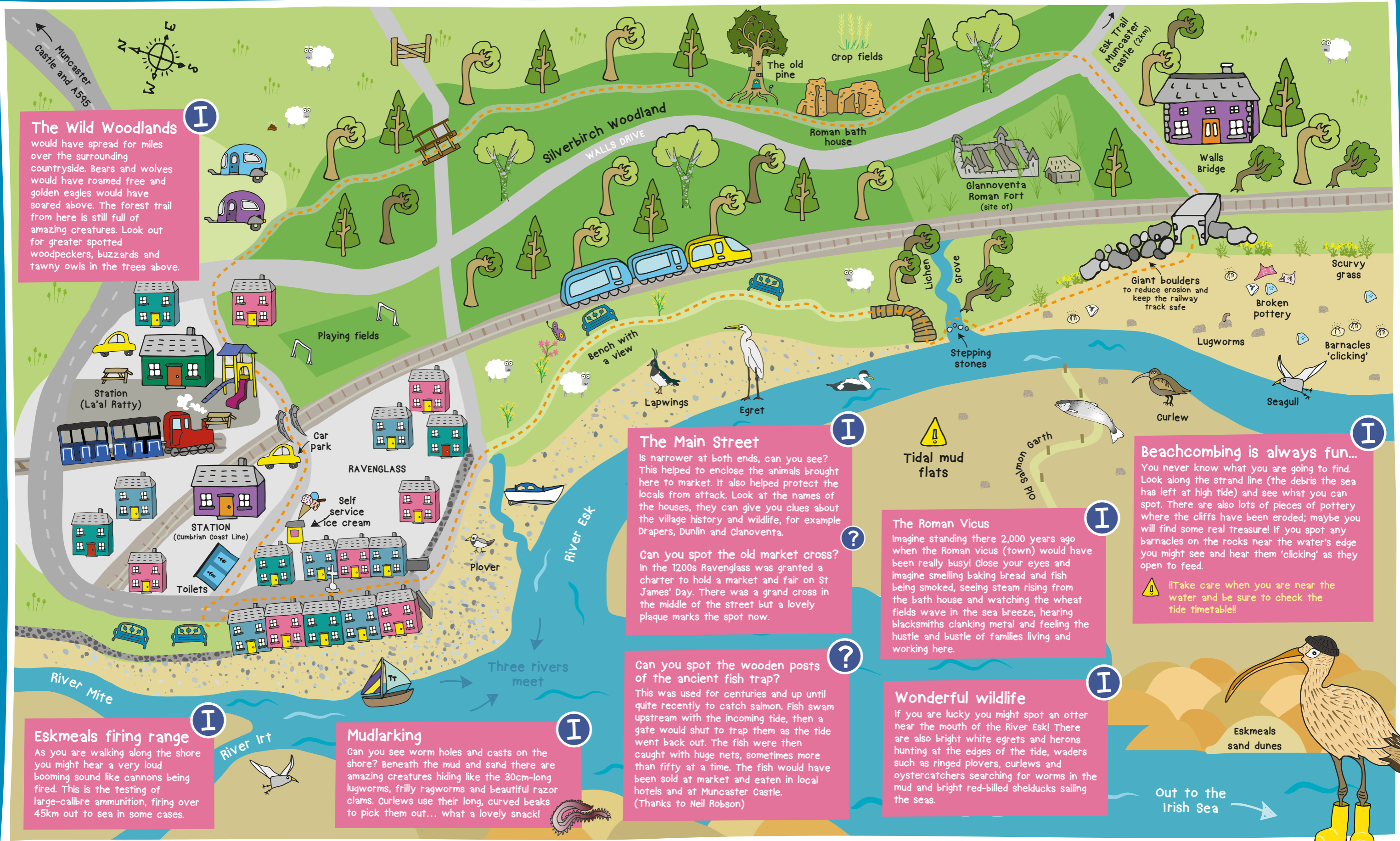
You never know what you are going to find. Look along the strand line (the debris the sea has left at high tide) and see what you can spot. There are also lots of pieces of pottery where the cliffs have been eroded; maybe you will find some real treasure! If you spot any barnacles on the rocks near the water's edge you might see and hear them 'clicking' as they open to feed.



!!Take care when you are near the water and be sure to check the tide timetable!!



Out to the Irish Sea



★ **Salve, hello, cuur-weee little adventurers and welcome to one of my favourite fishing villages in Cumbria... Ravenglass.**

This place was once home to the great Roman fort of Glannaventa, and is the spot where three extraordinary rivers meet, the Esk, the Irt and the Mite. Also, did you know that a cheeky jester once caused havoc here and that a Victorian ghost still says moo in the moonlight?

Stories of the land and sea have been told to children and grandchildren around the fireside for thousands of years.

The fishermen and fisherbirds fed the flames of the fire with tales of mythical sea creatures, wizards and sprites. These stories are not always written down... too spooky or secret for that; there is some truth in them, mind, and I am going to gift them to you now... so lean in, listen carefully and prepare to be fascinated...



1

The Trident Hunters

Many moons ago, when wild elk and great horned aurochs roamed the land, a man with a yellow and red painted face sat quietly by the water's edge knapping flint he had found on the beach. He was turning this sharp rock into an arrowhead he could use to hunt with. On his back was a birch bark net and in his hand was a fishing trident with three sharpened bones at the tip. He would use these to catch dinner for his family.

He had watched the animals around him and learnt how to be patient like the egrets, stealthy like the herons and fast like the falcons. He watched where the birds went to find hazelnut cobs and berries in the autumn. He was a Mesolithic hunter-gatherer from 6,000 years ago!

He had traded some of his flint tools for ochre paint and tuff from the Lake District fells, and while he sat



sharpening his knife he would think about the animal he was about to hunt for and catch. He would imagine he was the creature, feel how it might move and where it might hide in the shadows. He was a master of tracking.

He would walk bare-footed, dressed in animal skins, across the estuary, waiting and watching. He too heard the haunting call of the curlews... cuuuuuur weeeee... cuuuur weeeee... a bracelet of black pearls on his arm and a sixth sense of the natural world around him. A path of white light would lead him to his prey...

These skills have almost been lost in our modern world but birds like us still know how to tune into them and you can too if there is a whisper of the wild in you.

Did you know... archaeologists have discovered flint tools in the sand dunes here and raft-like structures that people used in the Stone Age. It was only twenty years ago my grandfather used to watch the folk of Ravenglass wading into the estuary with three-pronged forks, fishing for flounder!

2

King Eveling, The Fairy King

A pair of bright green eyes stare out from behind the hazel trees where an ancient Roman village once thrived. The eyes are not of a man or a beast but the immortal Fairy King named Eveling. His ancient kingdom of Avalon spans from here up onto the mountain pass of Hardknott where he keeps watch with his daughter Modron. From the roof of England, surrounded by sharp chiselled rocky summits, King Eveling guards his realm and has done for 2,000 years.

On the Hardknott Pass, near the old Roman fort of Mediobogdum there is an ancient ring of stones called The Rath, Eveling's stronghold. King Arthur as a young boy once visited to ask King Eveling to join him and unite their kingdoms but Eveling scoffed at this idea and laughed at young



Arthur, demanding that he

return to The Rath at nightfall when a moonlight feast would be held. Eveling would teach Arthur a lesson for being so disrespectful to such a wise and powerful king as he.

As the sun set in its orange glow and the moon glided upwards, Arthur watched the flaming torches flickering in The Rath above. King Eveling and his fairy kin danced and feasted to the sounds of ethereal music. King Arthur summoned his powerful ally Merlin, who conjured a great mist around the stones of The Rath. The swirling mists rose like waves over the mountains, the fairy music quietened and all fell silent above. As Arthur watched the mists fade away The Rath stood barren and soundless. King Eveling, his court and all his supernatural powers were gone.

Some say they became the rocks themselves; some say the king and the fairies are still there, trapped in an eternal dance, but can only be seen on a full moon. Be warned, though: do not join them, as you may be turned to stone as well!

3

Home sweet home, Roman style

Roman soldiers were sent to Britain from many parts of Europe, Asia and Africa and for some it must have been quite a shock! If you are a Celtic God, a fairy king or a very hairy creature, living at the top of Hardknott Pass would be a winner, but if you are someone who likes warm, sunny weather perhaps Ravenglass would suit you better.

Mediobogdum Fort at Hardknott

Lying at 250 metres above the sea, the lofty fort Mediobogdum is a wild and windswept place, where your only neighbour will be the proud and powerful King Eveling who lives at the enchanted fortress, The Rath (where he does like to have loud parties from time to time). In summer you can hear skylarks singing in the skies above and see mountain hares springing across the heather-scented fells. The air is clear, eagles soar above and the view is amazing. In winter the temperature can fall to minus 20, your hands will freeze, the ground is rather boggy and sloppy porridge will be on the menu most days, but it's a small price to pay when you live in the shadow of Scafell Pike, England's highest mountain!

Glannaventa Fort at Ravenglass

Can you see yourself sitting by the sparkling waters at a bustling and prosperous port? Well maybe Glannaventa Fort, situated on the tranquil west coast of Cumbria, is the place for you. There is a village shop, a steaming bath house and plenty of ale. Fresh salmon are on the menu most days and you can spot wild wolves and bears in the woodlands. Otters frolic in the rivers nearby and white egrets soar above. The port is a bustling place with ships arriving from all over the world. Enemy tribes might attack you from time to time but who cares when you can catch a tan on the sand dunes!

So which would you have chosen 2,000 years ago, the penthouse suite with a view at Hardknott or the tranquil sheltered seaside sanctuary of Ravenglass?

Emperor Hadrian didn't give his soldiers a choice and so archers from Syria were stationed at Hardknott to acclimatise them to the harsh British weather before being moved to Hadrian's Wall up north... they must have been absolutely freezing!



4

Tomfoolery at Muncaster Castle

It is the late 16th century and a colourful character sits waiting quietly under the chestnut tree outside Muncaster Castle. Thomas Skelton, the castle's fool (or jester as some people call him), is deciding a lone traveller's fate. The sunlight is fading, the traveller is tired and he asks Tom Fool for directions. Tom Fool has a choice: send him safely through the woodlands and across the ford or send him to his peril onto Waberthwaite Marsh and the treacherous sinking sands of the estuary. His choice depends on one thing... does Tom like the look of this man, or is he to be Tom's next victim? Yes, this is true!



Tom Skelton, Muncaster's fool, was famous for playing monstrous tricks on passers-by and even performed some pretty gruesome deeds while he lived at the castle. Apparently, a local carpenter had his head chopped off by Tom... The crime... falling in love with Lord Pennington's daughter!

To this day strange happenings such as doors moving, cold chills penetrating the room and spooky laughter can still be heard at Muncaster Castle... could it be Tom's spirit still playing tricks on people?

If you dare travel the path from here to Muncaster watch out too for the local Boggle or white lady who haunt the woodlands. And a word of warning... if you happen to be walking on a moonlit night and spot a pale gentleman dressed in Victorian clothing, please don't pester him as he is the infamous 'mooing' phantom who doesn't like to chat!

If you are feeling brave you can still visit Tom Fool's tree at Muncaster and experience one of England's most haunted castles. Fancy a sleepover in the terrifying tapestry room?

5

Choo choo here comes the train!

Have you spotted the fabulous little trains by the play park yet? This narrow-gauge railway, or La'al Ratty as us locals call it, was once used to transport iron ore mined from further up the valley. The little steam train has been chuffing up and down the Eskdale valley for almost 150 years and the great news is you can still catch a ride. My favourite part of the station museum is the restored signal box, where you can ring the

bell, work the levers and see how a real signal goes up and down!

Well, as you can see, Ravenglass and the Eskdale valley are rather special places and whether you are travelling by foot, wing or steam around my wonderful home I hope you enjoy it and have a great adventure! Farewell for now, brave explorers...



6

fun local story walks

for children and the young at heart

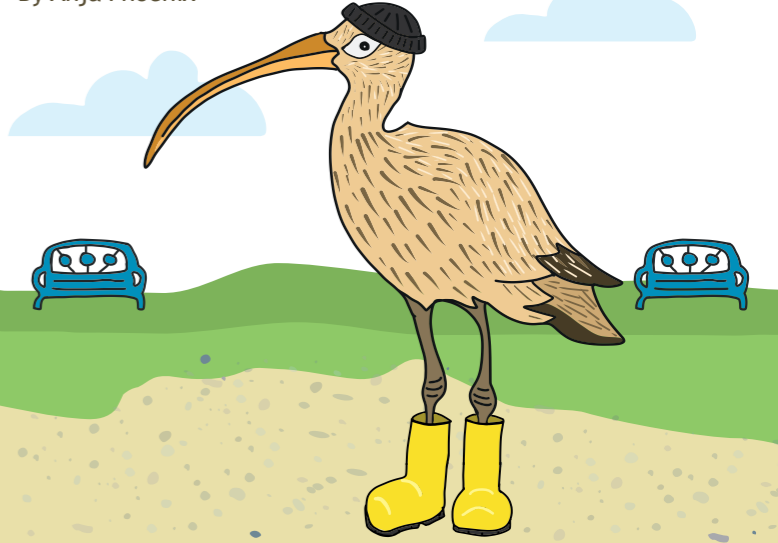
Walks around

The Lake District Coast

The Curlew's Tale

A story walk around Ravenglass

By Anja Phoenix



Easy to follow Map & Story
Explore, spot things & search for clues on the way



The bit for grown ups....

Route length
This 2.3km (1.5 - 2 hour) trail starts and finishes in the main car park by the train station.

Trail Safety Information
This Tale Trail follows the coast from Ravenglass to Walls Bridge then returns along the Esk Trail through the woodlands. The terrain is a mixture of grassy/slightly footpaths, gravel tracks and quiet roads. It is part of the famous Cumbria Coastal Way. Please stick to the marked footpaths and avoid unstable ground along the coast.

The La'al Ratty
The Ravenglass and Eskdale steam railway is open March until October and selected dates throughout the winter season. The museum is free to enter and there is also a cafe on site. Visit ravenglass-railway.co.uk to find out more.

Extra explorations
The spectacular Hadrian's Cycleway starts at the Roman Bath House and travels 174 miles to South Shields. For a shorter trip try the stunning Esk Trail, only 2km to magnificent Muncaster Castle!
If you want to explore the area by river there is a large car park near the centre of the village, next to the mainline railway station. Nearest postcode is CA18 1SQ. Turn left just before entering the main street in the village, go past the public toilets and the car park is on the left.

Directions and Parking
Ravenglass can be found just off the A95 between Whitehaven and Millom. There is a large car park near the centre of the village, next to the mainline railway station. Nearest postcode is CA18 1SQ. Turn left just before entering the main street in the village, go past the public toilets and the car park is on the left.



This trail is four of six developed with Copeland Borough Council and The Outdoor Partnership as part of the Connecting Cumbria's Hidden Coast programme.
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