

Begin the steady ascent of the  
 Bridleway, a long incline with industrial  
 origins. Much of the middle Geltsdale  
 landscape has been touched by  
 mining and quarrying, and you  
 can spot many clues. Look for the

When Carlisle city undertook to  
 extract water from this valley, they  
 fortunately did not choose to dam  
 it, or this walk would have been very  
 different. A railway was laid up the

2 Turn right after the bridge and  
 valley from Hynam Bridge and you  
 can still see evidence of its course,  
 particularly upstream of the High  
 Hynam meadow, where the valley  
 constricts above a lovely waterfall  
 and pool (popular with swimmers).  
 A rock cutting has isolated a block  
 of limestone. Known as Cat Rock,  
 this is popular with local climbers for  
 bouldering, but this area of the valley  
 is not Open Access.



Original words and pictures (c) Mark Richards  
 2009. Minor revisions by the North Pennines  
 National Landscape 2024. Front cover image  
 (c) D&H Photography.

All mapping, unless otherwise stated, is based  
 (partly) on Ordnance Survey mapping (c)  
 Crown copyright. All rights reserved Durham  
 County Council. LA100049055. 2024.

## Guide to walking

Mostly on firm tracks, with stretches  
 on green-ways and minor roads.  
 Your rights on open access land can  
 sometimes be restricted for nature  
 conservation, land management  
 or public safety reasons. To avoid  
 disappointment, please visit [www.  
 openaccess.naturalengland.org.uk](http://www.openaccess.naturalengland.org.uk)  
 to get the latest information, before you  
 set out.



[northpennines.org.uk](http://northpennines.org.uk)



North  
 Pennines  
 National  
 Landscape

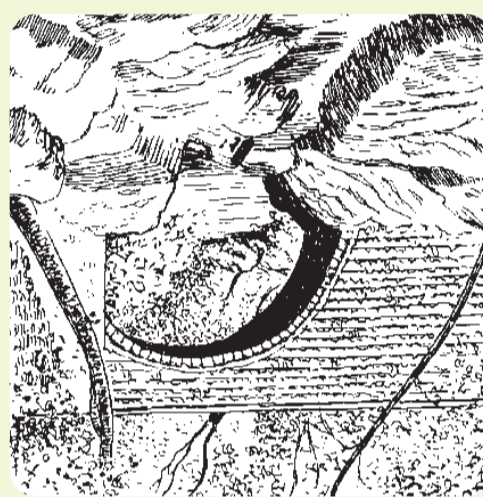


North Pennines  
 Global Geopark



Made possible with

Heritage  
 Fund



dominated Hynam Wood with the  
 minor hilltop beyond topped by a  
 cairn.

The track descends to Hynam Bridge,  
 originally constructed to carry horse-  
 drawn wagons of coal from the upper  
 valley. Later with the arrival of steam  
 and the Newcastle to Carlisle Railway,  
 a branch line was constructed from  
 Kirkhouse by the Earl of Carlisle, the  
 ancestral landowner of this valley.

After heavy rain the river can thunder  
 through the bridge arch, forcing its  
 way down the constricting gorge to  
 burst into a great pool at Low Hynam.

The history of these cairns extends  
 no further than post-enclosure  
 days when stones left by the stone  
 quarrying were picked up casually by  
 visitors and the cairns progressively  
 built, for fun. Nearby is the birch

**Start point:** from Castle Carrock,  
 follow the Geltsdale Road up the  
 hill to reach the bend in the road at  
 Jockey Shield (NY 558 556)

**W3W:** //unimpeded.reply.workloads  
 CA8 9NF

**Elevation gain:** 985ft/300metres

**Distance:** 6.4miles /  
 10.3kilometres

**Time:** approximately 3hrs

**Rating:** moderate - firm underfoot,  
 some steady inclines

**Parking:** some verge parking  
 available

**Public transport:** Castle Carrock  
 has a limited bus service - route  
 680 Brampton/Carlisle ([https://  
 legacy.cumbriaand.gov.uk/  
 buses/680/](https://legacy.cumbriaand.gov.uk/buses/680/))

1 This walk follows a natural circuit  
 of the valley head. Follow the track  
 descending directly from the bend at  
 Jockey Shield. Talkin Fell dominates  
 the higher view with its distinctive line  
 of cairns.

# Geltsdale

High level walk 5



North  
 Pennines  
 National  
 Landscape

Ordnance Survey benchmark of 1861 on the bedrock to the right-hand side of the track. There is another mark of the same date on Hynam Bridge.

**3** As a wall comes close on the left, you can see an old quarry path contouring right through the bracken. Keep up the slope to crest the brow and enjoy the fine view up the valley. The King's Forest of Geltsdale forms the left-hand side of the valley below Tarnmonath Fell, with Knotts Wood and Binney Banks on the lower flanks, and Hespeck Raise forming the right skyline.

A discovery of an Iron Age settlement above Binney Banks indicates the long settlement of this valley, although the Sites and Monuments record does not show the cluster of medieval house foundations, situated on a shelf over the brink directly below the kissing-gate.

**4** Keep right on the level way. As the well-built accompanying wall rises the green track forks. Pass a little cairn occupying a vantage into the lower How Gill valley. The green way heads towards the great dale-head wall of Tarnmonath Fell and the Gairs - a derelict dwelling built as homes for the principal gamekeeper and shepherd. The track hairpins right rising to a track junction.

**8** Turn right and cross Old Water bridge. Continue on the green track, which now rises gradually to contour the slopes of Middle Top, and soon arrives at a junction. The bridleway ahead continues to a lost bridge over New Water before heading on to Newbiggin, this old way from Hallbankgate would have been a major highway before the industrial revolution.

**9** Turn right on the branch track leading down to the waterworks compound. Go through the wide galvanised gate and pass below the Pump House Cottage to a ford and footbridge where Old and New Water meet. Follow the road along the valley floor, with the old woodland of Binney Banks to the right.

**10** Cross the bridge by the barns and wind up the hill, passing the cottages to join the access road from Geltsdale House heading over the cattle gird (site of Open Access signboard). The switchback road is lined by trees and woodland to the left, and gives lovely views across the valley to the King's Forest, Talkin Fell and Simmerson Hill. Passing Hynam Shield, the road descends to the starting point.

**5** Go right and ford a couple of gills. Continue on the green way or, if you are curious, venture up through the rushes to inspect the remains of the Gairs Colliery. Folklore tells that George Stephenson's locomotive 'The Rocket' ended its working life on this branch line, plying coal wagons down to Kirkhouse. You can see the broad sidings and imagine the coal loading and collection activity.

**6** Clamber up to the ruined shed and look at the collapsed level that must lead into a labyrinth of coal seam galleries. It is said that the colliery was closed in 1938 because the mine manager could not drive his car up here. Descend over the spoil banks to the green way or contour on a sheep track, to the right of a line of limestone sink hollows, though the bracken and heather to re-connect with the green track as it levels.

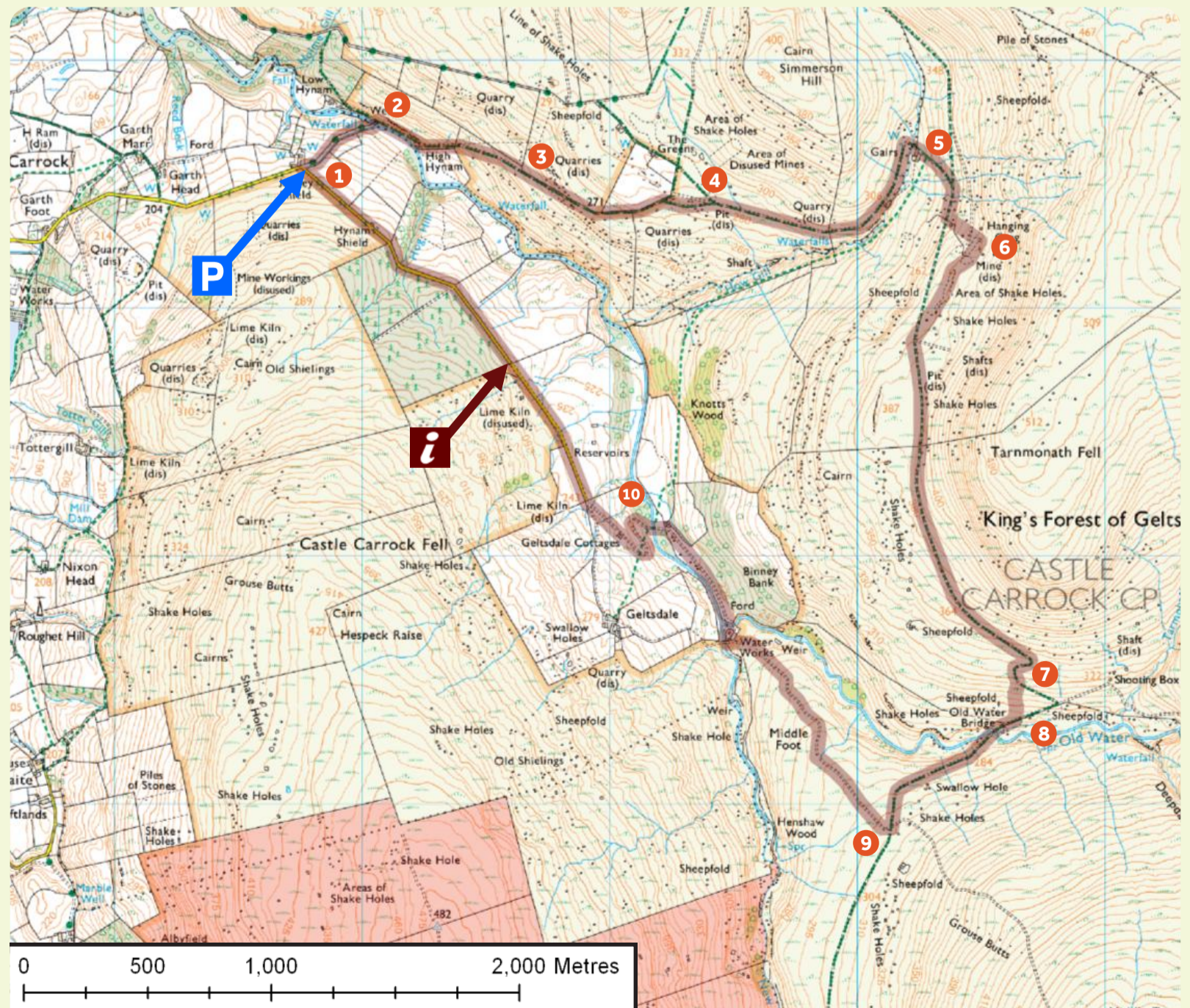
You are now under Tarnmonath Fell, part of the main Pennines massif leading to Cold Fell. The name is another of clue to a long-lost cultural past. The area has an unusual concentration of Welsh place names: Croglin, Cumrew, Castle Carrock, Tarnmonath and Talkin. The end of Tarnmonath contains 'mynydd', the Welsh word for a mountain. The prefix 'tor', a descriptive variant for 'an

outcrop', gives the name 'Tormynydd' which is unique to Cumbria.

As the only Royal Forest in Cumbria, the King's Forest of Geltsdale was first recorded in the Lanercost Priory's Cartulary of 1210 as 'forresta mea de Geltesdale', meaning the moorland hunting ground. The name applies only to the slopes of Tarnmonath and strictly this is Geltsdale. It will have been a red deer hunting forest, but there is little record of who was the monarch. It has been owned by branches of the Howard family of Naworth Castle since the Norman

Conquest, perhaps their royal connections might harbour some link.

**7** The bridleway continues on its contouring line and then, as the great combe at the head of the Old Water valley comes into view, the track switches right. This moorland amphitheatre is managed by the RSPB, who protect the habitat of several of our most endangered moorland birds, including Hen Harrier. The green path switches again, with a view down to a redundant circular sheepfold, and meets a wide green track.



**P** Parking Place      Line of Route      Restricted Access      **i** Access Information