



LANGDALE

*escape to the Lake District*

### Stickle Tarn & Blea Rigg

**This is a walk of two contrasting halves: the dramatic but popular Stickle Ghyll and Tarn, and the relative peace and solitude of Blea Rigg (on a recent morning traverse of the Rigg at Easter holiday time I met only two people). There are sweeping views from the ridge in all directions. The ascent alongside Stickle Ghyll is steep and sustained but mostly on well-pitched paths. The tracks on Blea Rigg are less well travelled, and so a little more care in route-following is needed. The descent back down to the valley is steep, stony and loose in places, requiring a steady approach.**

**Length: 4 ½ miles      Ascent: 450 metres      Maps: Explorers OL6 & OL7**

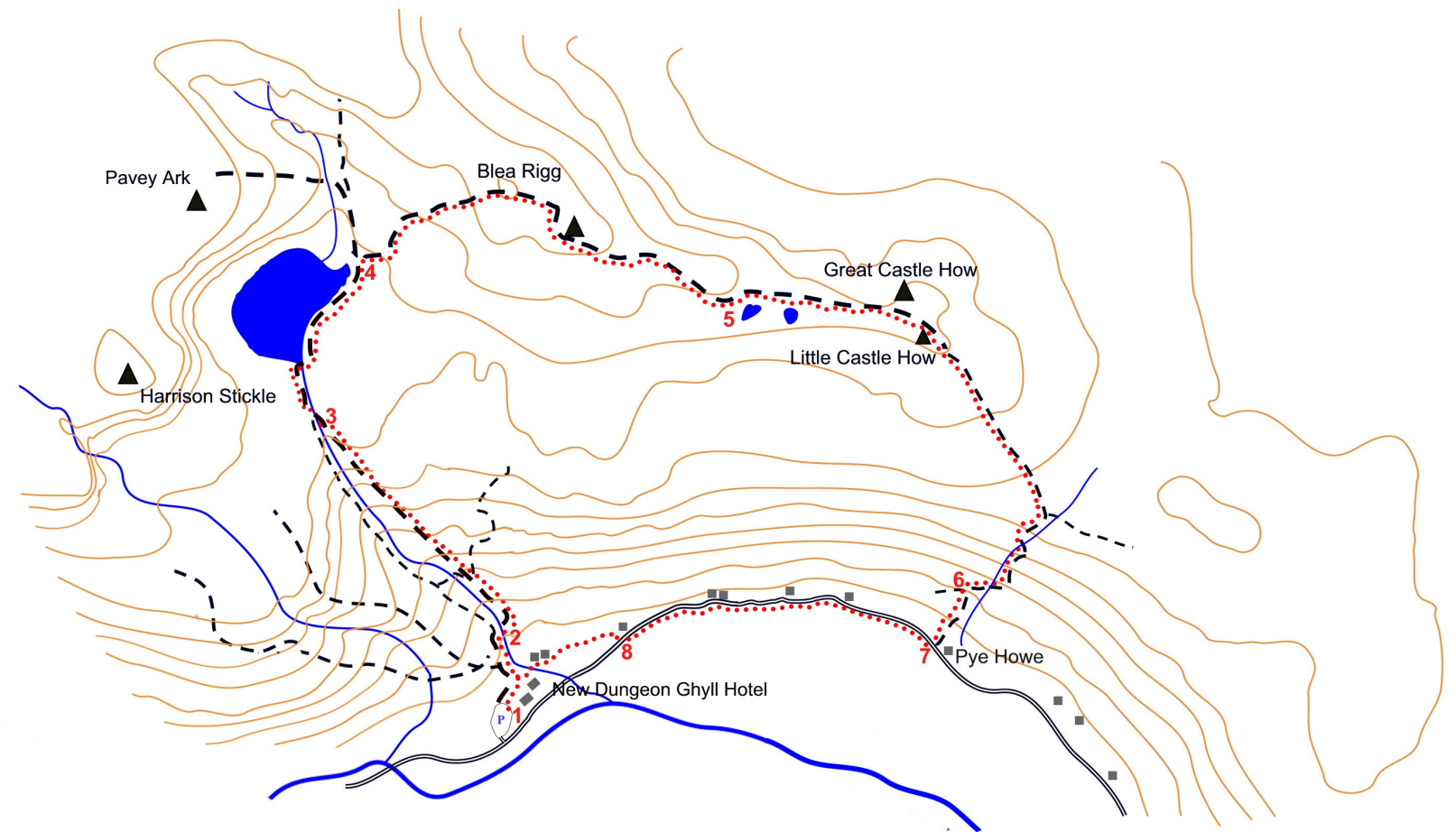
1) Start at the National Trust Stickle Ghyll car park, just past the New Dungeon Ghyll Hotel & Stickle Barn, 2 ½ miles west of the Langdale Estate on the main Great Langdale Valley Road. Turn left at the bus shelter and information boards in the car park to follow a path that heads uphill, past a National Trust "Stickle Ghyll" plaque on a boulder. Follow the pitched path up the left bank of Stickle Ghyll.

2) Bear right over the footbridge and then follow the path up the right side of the Ghyll. It soon crosses a stile and a stream, passes through a gap in a wall and forks; continue to follow the path up the right bank of the Ghyll, heading towards a small stand of young pines, ignoring the paths re-crossing the Ghyll to the left, and climbing steeply up the hillside to the right. Pass the pines and continue uphill.

3) The path eventually becomes steeper, more broken, and bounded closely by the river on the left and a band of short crags to the right; these crags encroach increasingly onto the line of the path until they meet the river and bar the way, just after an awkward rocky step in the path. Cross the river by a line of stepping stone boulders and continue up the final, rocky path on the left side of the ghyll, to Stickle Tarn. At the tarn, turn right across the ghyll by a line of large stepping stone boulders, and then follow the path skirting the southeast shore of the tarn.

4) At a line of stepping-stones across a boggy patch, take a right fork that winds away from the tarn in a generally easterly direction, gently climbing the slopes of Blea Rigg before heading more directly for the top. Where the path levels out onto this broad ridge, the views open out in all directions. The path continues in an easterly, and then southeasterly, direction, undulating through a landscape of marshy pools, peaty grassland and rocky knolls. It gradually veers towards the northeastern side of the ridge, with magnificent views across Grasmere, Easdale, and the eastern fells beyond. The path reaches a col between rockier sections of this northeastern edge, and then rises to follow another crest. Partway along this, you meet a patch of dark peat bog in the middle of the path. Turn right here to take a path that splits off at a 90-degree angle and contours around the rocks of the knoll before descending in a southerly direction. It then veers east-southeast to once again continue lengthways along the ridge, although for now on its southwestern side, with views across the Langdale Valley to Crinkle Crags and the Greenburn Horseshoe. Continue to follow the path where it descends eastwards, passing over slabs of volcanic rocky, back towards the north-eastern side of the ridge before it trends steeply down to the south-south east, towards the centre of ridge.

5) After a fairly steep descent, the path levels out and heads eastwards to bypass two small tarns on their northern side, as it approaches Great Castle How. After a short pull up the northeast side of Little Castle How, the path descends more consistently, initially to the southeast. Where the path meets and crosses a small stream, turn right at a tiny cairn to follow a vague grassy path down to the southwest. This becomes more distinct where it begins to descend steeply down towards the valley. This path is stony and loose in places, so take care, and take your time. Ignore the path that bisects horizontally across the slope partway down, and continue steeply and directly downwards. The angle relents soon after, where the path veers rightwards to continue the descent diagonally across the slope at a more reasonable gradient. After crossing two becks, with their ash and holly trees, you reach a stile in a wall.



6) Cross the stile and take the left fork to continue downhill through a milder landscape of hawthorn trees and sheep pasture. This final section of descent is marked at intervals by yellow arrows on posts, and mostly follows along the left side of a stone wall, which guides the walker to a gate and the Great Langdale Valley road.

7) Turn right onto the road and follow it for approximately 1 km, taking care for traffic. As you head back towards the start of the walk, you will pass a number of farmhouses on your right hand side, for this is the sunnier south-facing edge of the valley, where farmers, since mediaeval times, have chosen to live. By contrast, on the north-facing opposite side of the valley dwellings are few and far between.

8) Soon after passing an isolated old barn near to the road, take a stile on the right to join – very slightly upslope – a path that heads left through a gap in a wall, and then contours parallel to another wall to gain a gate at a farm and cluster of houses. Past the gate, a lane doglegs between the buildings and reverts to a track that crosses a beck by a slate footbridge. Turn immediately left and follow the track down alongside the stream to a second footbridge. Once over this turn right and up through a gap in a wall. At the National Trust 'Stickle Ghyll' plaque on a boulder, turn left to regain Stickle Ghyll Car Park.

The Langdale Estate - Great Langdale - Nr Ambleside - Cumbria - LA22 9JD

015394 37302 - info@langdale.co.uk - www.langdale.co.uk