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First edition 2014

ISBN: 978 1 85284 734 0

Reprinted 2017, 2018, 2020 and 2021 (with updates)



Printed in Czechia on behalf of Latitude Press Limited on responsibly sourced paper

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

All photographs are by the author unless otherwise stated.



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### Acknowledgements

As a Lake District addict, I am always grateful to the many organisations – often dependant on the work of volunteers – that help make walking in the National Park as safe and as enjoyable as possible. These include the National Trust, the Lake District National Park Authority, the Friends of the Lake District, Fix the Fells, various local authorities and, of course, the hard-working Mountain Rescue teams.

Also, I'd like to thank Heleyne and Jess for being such good company on many of the walks in this book.

### Updates to this Guide

While every effort is made by our authors to ensure the accuracy of guidebooks as they go to print, changes can occur during the lifetime of an edition. Any updates that we know of for this guide will be on the Cicerone website ([www.cicerone.co.uk/734/updates](http://www.cicerone.co.uk/734/updates)), so please check before planning your trip. We also advise that you check information about such things as transport, accommodation and shops locally. Even rights of way can be altered over time. We are always grateful for information about any discrepancies between a guidebook and the facts on the ground, sent by email to [updates@cicerone.co.uk](mailto:updates@cicerone.co.uk) or by post to Cicerone, Juniper House, Murley Moss, Oxenholme Road, Kendal LA9 7RL.

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*Front cover:* On the delightful valley path below High Rigg (Walk 23)

*Facing page:* Bow Fell towering over upper Eskdale (Walk 16)

## WALK 14 – STANLEY GHYLL FORCE AND RIVER ESK

<b>Start/finish</b>	Pay-and-display car park at Dalegarth Station, near Boot, Eskdale (NY 173 007)
<b>Distance</b>	7km (4½ miles)
<b>Total ascent</b>	170m (550ft)
<b>Grade</b>	1
<b>Walking time</b>	2¼hrs
<b>Terrain</b>	Quiet lanes; woodland and riverside paths; slippery rocks in gorge can be avoided
<b>Maps</b>	OS Explorer OL6; or OS Landrangers 89 and 96
<b>Refreshments</b>	Boot Inn and Brook House Inn in Boot; Fellbites Café at Dalegarth Station
<b>Transport</b>	Dalegarth Station is served by the Ravenglass and Eskdale Railway (01229 717171 <a href="http://www.ravenglass-railway.co.uk">www.ravenglass-railway.co.uk</a> )

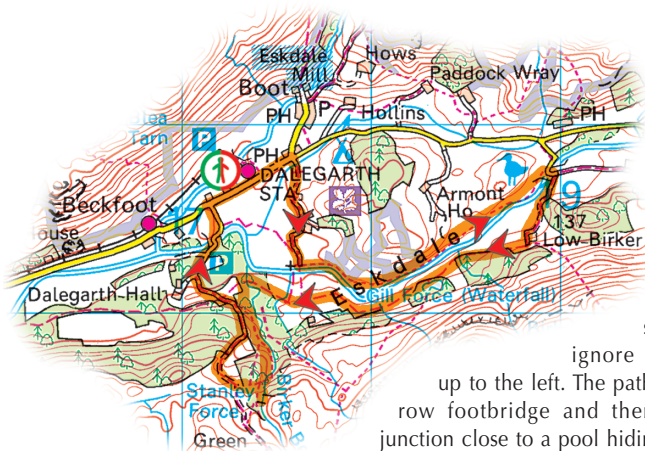
From the entrance to Dalegarth Station, turn left along the road. On reaching the Brook House Inn, turn right along a wide track – signposted St Catherine’s Church. Keep right at the fork. On reaching the church, turn left along the riverside path – signposted Doctor Bridge.

About 80m after the next gate, on reaching a fingerpost, head up the short embankment on your left and turn right along the higher path. (A 90m detour along the lower path, once part of a mineral railway, leads to a picturesque gorge where the line used to cross the River Esk via a girder bridge.)

Continue upstream on the northern side of the **River Esk** until you reach the humpback stone bridge known as Doctor Bridge. Cross this and immediately turn right. The clear track later winds its



*St Catherine’s Church,  
Eskdale*



way uphill immediately in front of the buildings at **Low Birker**.

As the bridleway then swings right, ignore a lesser track up to the left. The path crosses a narrow footbridge and then climbs to a junction close to a pool hiding among some conifers. Bear right here.

About 1km beyond Low Birker, ignoring the path signposted to the right, go through the gate and continue on the clear track. This twists and turns, crosses a small ford and then reaches a gate. Go through this to enter the woodland surrounding Stanley Ghyll. A few strides beyond a railed footbridge, you'll come to a junction of trails marked by a fingerpost. Turn left here, up the embankment to reach a wall. Walk with the wall on your right.

After some picnic benches, a clear path heads upstream through a beautiful area of mixed woodland. Native species, which are actively encouraged, include sessile oak, birch and hazel, but there are some planted conifers dotted about too. Slowly gain height and cross the first of three bridges over the gill.

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As this dark but lush world begins to close in around you, you come to realise that **Stanley Ghyll** is quite unlike anything else in the Lake District. The steep sides of the gorge are dripping with mosses and ferns, some of which are rare; and, even when the outside world is cool, you can feel the humidity rising.

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After the second railed bridge, climb a flight of steps over Stanley Ghyll. At the top, the main route heads right. However, if you want to get up-close and personal with **Stanley Ghyll Force**, continue beyond the third and final bridge. As the signs point out, however, the next short section of path is on slippery rocks with a steep drop into the ravine. Confident walkers – with good soles on their boots – will be treated to an uninterrupted view of the 18m sliver of whitewater gushing down through a hidden gap in the almost black rocks.

## LAKE DISTRICT: LOW LEVEL AND LAKE WALKS

After viewing the waterfall, retrace your steps to rejoin the main route by taking a path to the left, just before the second bridge. This then zig-zags its way out of the gorge. Don't cross the small clapper-like bridge; instead, turn sharp right again. Just before the path starts descending, follow the less obvious trail on the left. After leaving the woods, take a few strides straight ahead through the bracken to join a rough track. Turn right along this.

The track later becomes a lane that crosses Trough House Bridge over a lovely gorge on the River Esk. On reaching a T-junction with the main valley road, turn right. The station is about 300m ahead on the left.

### WATERFALLS

Depending on the definition used, there are dozens, even hundreds of waterfalls scattered throughout the Lake District National Park. Several are visited on routes in this book, including Tom Gill (see Walk 1), Stockghyll Force (Walk 10), Sour Milk Ghyll (Walk 12), Stanley Ghyll Force (Walk 14) and Aira Force (Walk 27).

Many of the waterfalls in the Lake District are a dramatic by-product of the last glacial period – the result of the powerful interplay of ice and rock creating 'hanging valleys'. A good example can be found in Borrowdale: the Lodore Falls on Watendlath Beck (see Walks 21 and 22). Watendlath Beck's hanging valley was gouged out by a tributary to the main Borrowdale glacier, and so didn't erode as deeply. The difference in levels is exaggerated by the Skiddaw slates of the main valley being eroded more quickly than the Borrowdale volcanics, on which the beck lies. The result is that the upper section of the beck 'hangs' above the level of the glaciated valley floor (Borrowdale), dropping dramatically, via the waterfall, as it reaches the main valley.

Given perpetual life by the region's high rainfall, the waterfalls come thundering off the fells in a variety of forms: from gently cascading becks and elegant ribbon-like falls to deafening surges of churning whitewater. Many carry the name 'force'. Like the words fell, beck, dale and tarn, this is derived from an old Norse word, *foss*, in this case simply meaning 'waterfall'.

