

SUMMIT WALKS | CIRCULAR WALKS | NATURE WALKS

## MOUNTAIN WALKS

# HELVELLYN

15 ROUTES TO ENJOY ON AND AROUND HELVELLYN



TINA CODLING



## CONTENTS

Introduction .....	vii
Acknowledgements .....	viii
About the walks .....	viii
Navigation .....	ix
Safety & well-being .....	x
Weather .....	xi
Kit & comfort .....	xi
Mountain rescue .....	xii
Behaviour & respecting the environment .....	xiii
Walking with your dog .....	xiv
How to use this book .....	xv
Wainwrights .....	xvi
Glossary .....	xvii

### THE ROUTES

01 Glenridding to Aira Force ●○○○○ 4km/2.5 miles .....	1
02 Lanty's Tarn circular ●○○○○ 3.9km/2.4 miles .....	7
03 Raven Crag ●○○○○ 4.6km/2.9 miles .....	13
04 Glenridding Dodd ●○○○○ 4.2km/2.6 miles .....	19
05 Gowbarrow Fell ●○○○○ 7.2km/4.5 miles .....	25
06 Sheffield Pike ●○○○○ 8.5km/5.3 miles .....	31
07 Grisedale Tarn from Patterdale ●○○○○ 12.8km/8 miles .....	39
08 Place Fell ●○○○○ 12.2km/7.6 miles .....	45
09 Birks, St Sunday Crag & Arnison Crag ●○○○○ 9.6km/6 miles .....	51
10 Helvellyn from Swirls ●○○○○ 10.9km/6.8 miles .....	57
11 Helvellyn via Raise Beck ●○○○○ 12.8km/8 miles .....	63
12 Sticks Pass to Helvellyn ●○○○○ 12.3km/7.6 miles .....	69
13 Catstye Cam, Swirral Edge, Helvellyn & the Keppel Cove pony track ●○○○○ 15.3km/9.5 miles .....	75
14 Helvellyn via Striding Edge and Swirral Edge ●○○○○ 13.1km/8.1 miles .....	83
15 Ambleside to Thirlmere via Helvellyn ●○○○○ 18.5km/11.5 miles .....	93
Appendix .....	100



Download the  
**Mountain Walks Helvellyn**  
GPX files from  
[www.adventurebooks.com/MWH-GPX](http://www.adventurebooks.com/MWH-GPX)

#### ROUTE GRADES

Easy	●○○○○
Medium	●●○○○
Hard	●●●○○
Full-on	●●●●●







## **INTRODUCTION**

Set within the Lake District National Park, which was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2017, Helvellyn is the highest point on an undulating ridge running from Clough Head in the north to Dollywaggon Pike in the south. At 950 metres, it is the third highest mountain in England and offers extensive views across the Lake District to the tops of at least a hundred other fells.

From the east, the Helvellyn massif is made up of ridges and coves. Two of these ridges are among the most well-known features of the Lake District and are on the must-do list of everyone enthralled by the mountains or excited by an element of risk. Carved by ice, Striding Edge and Swirral Edge are like two arms reaching out to embrace the glacial corrie containing Red Tarn.

Helvellyn is part of the Borrowdale Volcanic Group of rocks, formed through geological processes starting around 450 million years ago. However, the landscape we see today was shaped during the last ice age, which ended around 12,000 years ago. All of this means there are lots of interesting nooks and crannies to explore in the coves and valleys below Helvellyn and its near neighbours, including tarns and waterfalls, flora and fauna, and the remains of mining activity carried out in the 19th and 20th centuries. Ullswater, a 'ribbon lake' and the second largest body of water in the Lake District, is another point of interest.

As well as the airy ridges of Striding Edge and Swirral Edge, there are plenty of other interesting ways to reach the broad summit of Helvellyn, which boasts not only a trig point but also a well-built shelter in the shape of a cross. From the west, near Thirlmere Reservoir, there are routes that are shorter and less precipitous than 'the edges' on the eastern side. There are also gentler routes from Glenridding and Patterdale.

There are many grand days out to be had on the big fells surrounding Helvellyn, but with low-level walks and outings to some of the smaller summits, this book caters for everyone from thrill seekers to historians and naturalists, as well as those looking for easier walks with people not yet ready, or no longer able, to take on a big summit. It also leaves plenty of routes to be discovered once you have fallen in love with the area.

**Tina Codling**

*View of Skiddaw on the descent from Helvellyn (walk 12).*



8.5km/5.3 miles

## 06/SHEFFIELD PIKE

A walk of two halves with an ascent through heathery outcrops followed by a wander through the area's industrial past.

### / ESSENTIAL INFO

GRADE ●●○○

DISTANCE **8.5KM/5.3 MILES**

ASCENT **540M**

TIME **4 HRS (WALKER)/1 HR 45 MINS (RUNNER)**

START/FINISH **GLENRIDDING**

START GRID REF **NY 386 169**

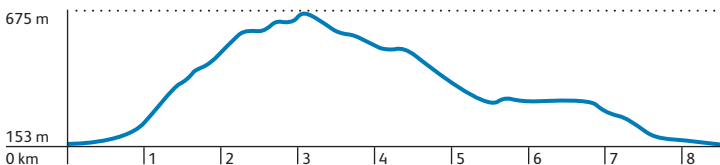
START GPS **54.5438, -2.9491**

OS MAP **OL5, THE ENGLISH LAKES, NORTH-EASTERN AREA (1:25,000)**

### / OVERVIEW

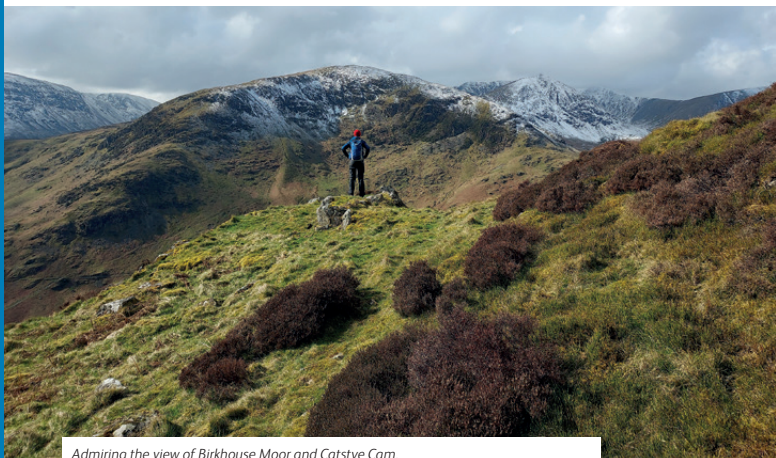
Sheffield Pike sits between Glencoyne Beck and Glenridding Beck and is easy to spot from the summit of Helvellyn. Its lower slopes to the south-west, in the col separating it from Stybarrow Dodd, Raise and Birkhouse Moor, host what remains of Greenside Mine. This lead mine became the site of experiments by the Atomic Weapons Research Establishment during the Cold War in the late 1950s. The site is now a Scheduled Monument.

YHA Helvellyn is housed in one of the former mine buildings and there are bunkhouses in others nearby. Many of the cottages in and around Glenridding were built to house mineworkers. The village also grew as a result of an increase in tourism. Today, some of the former mineworkers' cottages are used as holiday homes.



*Ullswater from Heron Pike.*

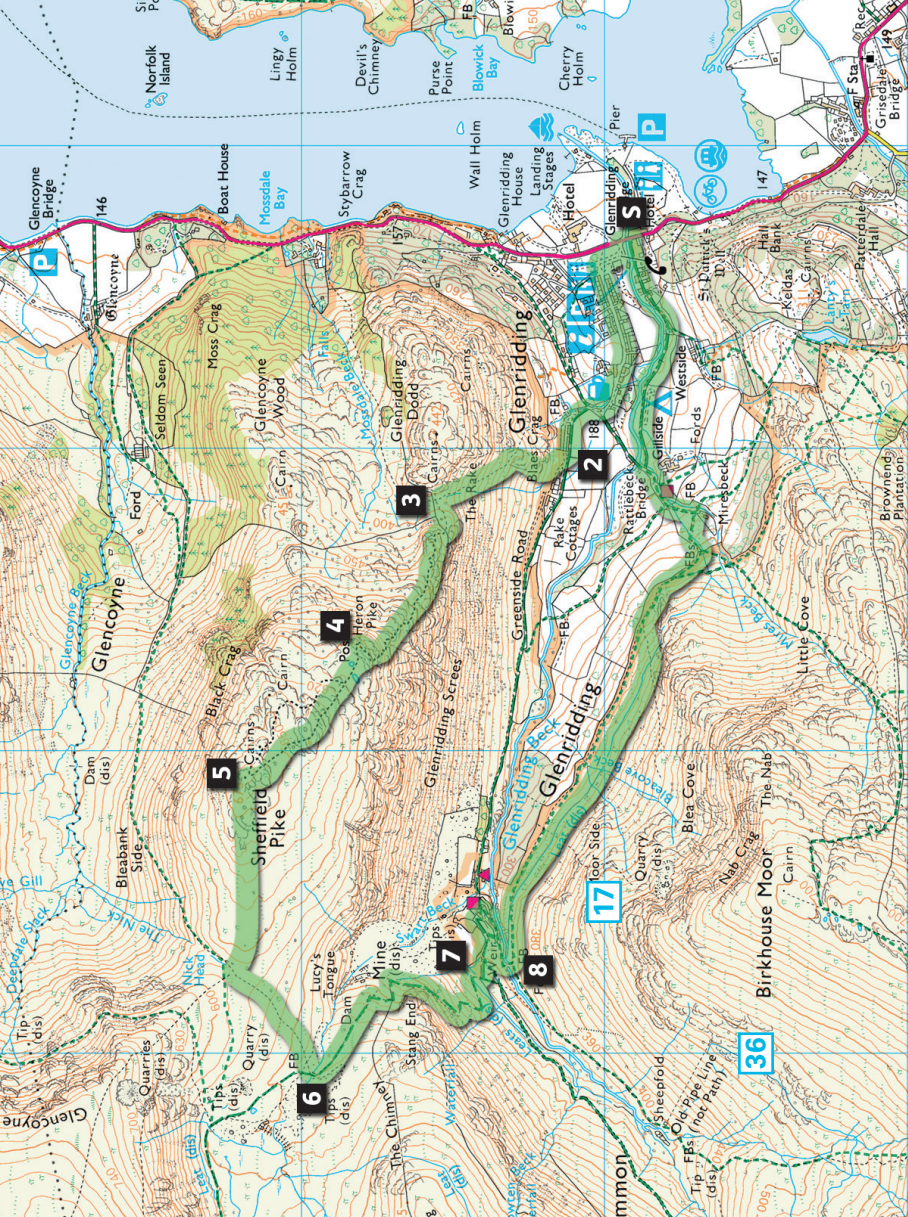




Admiring the view of Birkhouse Moor and Catstye Cam.

## DIRECTIONS

- 1** From the bridge over the river on the main road (A592) through Glenridding, **walk north** on the pavement alongside the A592. Shortly afterwards **turn left** on to Greenside Road then **keep left** to stay on Greenside Road. Walk past the Travellers Rest pub then **turn right** at a junction. Ignore the footpath sign pointing to the right and keep going along the road as it **curves round to the left** in front of a row of houses.
- 2** **Go through a gate next to a cattle grid and turn right** on to a path between the two rows of houses, signposted *Glenridding Dodd ½m*. This **curves round to the left of Blaes Crag** to a flatter area where you can stop for a breather or clamber on to the top of the crag to look at the view across the village. It then continues **uphill in more or less a straight line to a gate** at the col between Glenridding Dodd and Sheffield Pike.
- 3** **Turn left and walk west-south-west**. Shortly afterwards the **path turns north** to meet the wall. **Cross through the wall**; follow the path as it **curves slightly left then right** and picks its way up rocky steps through the heather. After 650m, at NY 372 177, the ground starts to flatten and you reach a junction; **turn right** here to go to the point on Heron Pike marked as 'Post' on the OS map, which is a great place to pause and look at the view across Ullswater. The metal post, with M on one side and H on the other, is one of two on this fell marking the boundary between the Marshall and Howard estates. You may spot the second one as you descend later.



© Crown Copyright and/or database right. All rights reserved. Licence number AC0000809882.





*Arnison Crag and Birks from near Heron Pike.*


- 4** From the post, **retrace your steps to the path junction and turn right.** The path now meanders north-west, passing between some small pools and across a flattish and potentially boggy area. It then rises through rockier terrain before dropping down slightly to another flat boggy section and rising once more to gain the summit of Sheffield Pike at 675m, passing a shelter in the rocks just before the final rocky steps. From the top you will start to see evidence of quarrying and mining, including spoil heaps. Looking south-west you should be able to pick out the whole of Striding Edge and the summit of Helvellyn, including the summit shelter and cairn, and the upper part of Swirral Edge behind Catstye Cam. At the base of Catstye Cam at the bottom of the ridgeline to the right, you might be able to see the remains of Keppel Cove Dam. Birkhouse Moor is in the foreground on the left.
- 5** From the summit, **descend the ridgeline heading west** towards Nick Head, keeping the spoil heaps in front of you. **Turn left** at a path junction and walk, still aiming for the spoil heaps, to a footbridge.





Greenside Mine.

- 6** Cross the footbridge and join a bridleway as it swings left and descends towards the mine.\* After 350m it **curves right then left and right** again, avoiding the remains of some of the mine buildings and spoil heaps.

 \*If you want to explore the upper part of the mine, including an old dam, follow a faint path from the footbridge on the right-hand side of the beck then contour right to join the bridleway at the end of the first zigzag section.

After another 260m there are some **more zigzags** (left, right, left, right, left).

- 7** As you descend, just before the last of the zigzags, look out for a leat crossing the bridleway and other evidence of the area's past but remember this is a Scheduled Monument so please respect any *No entry* signs. As you approach the old mine buildings **turn right** on to a track going down to a weir and footbridge.\* (Before crossing the bridge, you may wish to continue down through



Heron Pike and Sheffield Pike from Glenridding Dodd.

a gate to take a look at the buildings, which are now bunkhouses and a youth hostel, and up to the different levels of the mine. There is also a great view of the mine area from the path on the other side of the beck.)



\*If you prefer a slightly shorter walk back, **turn left** on to a track (Greenside Road) going down through the mine buildings and past the youth hostel. This turns to tarmac as you cross the cattle grid on the approach to the village.

- 8** **Cross the footbridge then turn left.** After 200m **fork right.** You are now walking alongside an old leat. Continue, **crossing two footbridges**, for around 1km to where the path drops down to a wall. **Turn right at the wall.** After 300m **go through a gate on the left** and follow the path, which soon becomes a track, downhill towards Rattlebeck Bridge.\*



\*If you want to visit the Travellers Rest before going back to the village centre, **cross the bridge and turn right** on to Greenside Road.

**Turn right** just before Rattlebeck Bridge to walk past Gillside Farm campsite on your right, with Glenridding Beck on your left, back to the village, approximately 800m away.

## / GOOD TO KNOW

### PUBLIC TRANSPORT AND ACCESS

Glenridding is accessible by Stagecoach buses from local towns and villages. The Ullswater Bus runs at weekends and bank holidays from March until November: [www.situcumbria.org.uk](http://www.situcumbria.org.uk)

The A592 passes through Glenridding; there are pay-and-display car parks in the village.

### WHEN TO WALK IT

Because the top of Sheffield Pike can be boggy in places it is best to do this walk after a period of dry weather. A clear day is a must for views along Ullswater and across to Helvellyn. It is a nice summit to walk to in soft, new snow but microspikes may be required if there is ice around.

### TERRAIN AND NAVIGATION

The ascent from the road up The Rake to the gate is steep, and from the col between Sheffield Pike and Glenridding Dodd it is both rocky and steep, with the path weaving through heather and rock bands. Once on the plateau the biggest issue is avoiding boggy sections. There is a great viewpoint east along Ullswater from

Heron Pike; stay away from the edge as there is a big drop here. Greenside Mine is a Scheduled Monument, and some areas are not on access land – please obey any *No entry* signs.

### FACILITIES AND REFRESHMENTS

There are toilets and a tourist information office in Glenridding. In the village you'll also find Catstycam, a well-stocked outdoor supplies shop, and The Corner Shop, for groceries, coffee and ice cream. Places to eat in Glenridding include Fellbites Cafe, Helvellyn Country Kitchen, Fairlight Cafe (also a guest house) and the Travellers Rest pub.

### DOGS AND KIDS

This walk will pose no difficulties for dogs and children who are accustomed to steep ascents. Some of the remains of the mining activity here are on access land so it is OK to go off-path and explore but keep a close eye on your children to make sure they do not damage themselves or any artefacts.

### POINTS OF INTEREST

The Greenside Mine Company was formed in 1825 to exploit a rich lead vein that had been



Exploring off-path.

discovered in the mid-17th century. At one point the mine had its own smelt mill and silver refinery and in the 1940s it was the largest producer of lead ore in the UK. Power for the mining operations was supplied by watermills and, later, by hydroelectricity and a number of dams were built to regulate the flow of water, some of which can still be seen today. In 1927 the Keppel Cove Dam collapsed, flooding Glenridding. Separately, the village also suffered major flooding in 2015 as a result of Storm Desmond. The mine closed in 1961 but in 1959 it was used as part of Operation Orpheus, a programme of testing by the Atomic Weapons Research Establishment to find out whether large underground explosions could be detected ahead of a proposed ban on nuclear tests.