

Lancashire Walks



Coniston

The Old Man of Coniston: a walk to the top of Lost Lancashire

Thus far on this page the authors have assiduously kept within the 1974 boundaries of Lancashire. However to celebrate the 50th walk we felt something special had to be done. After seeking approval from our indulgent editor, Craig Fleming, we organised an expedition into "Lost Lancashire" that part of the county absorbed into Cumbria under local government re-organisation. Indeed we believe there is a case for reclaiming this Lancashire over the water and take as our authority A.Wainwright himself who states categorically "The whole of the Coniston Group lies within Lancashire..." The walk described is a classic round starting in the village of Coniston and includes a walk to the summit of the Old Man of Coniston which at 2633ft/803m was the highest point in Lancashire until 1974.

Start: Car park/Information centre on B5285 close by church in Coniston village centre.

Distance: 17 Km or 10½ miles

Time: 6 - 8 hours

Terrain: This is a serious and arduous outing. Walkers should be well equipped with suitable footwear and waterproofs.

1. Car park to Dow Crag (6 Km or 4 miles: 2 hours)

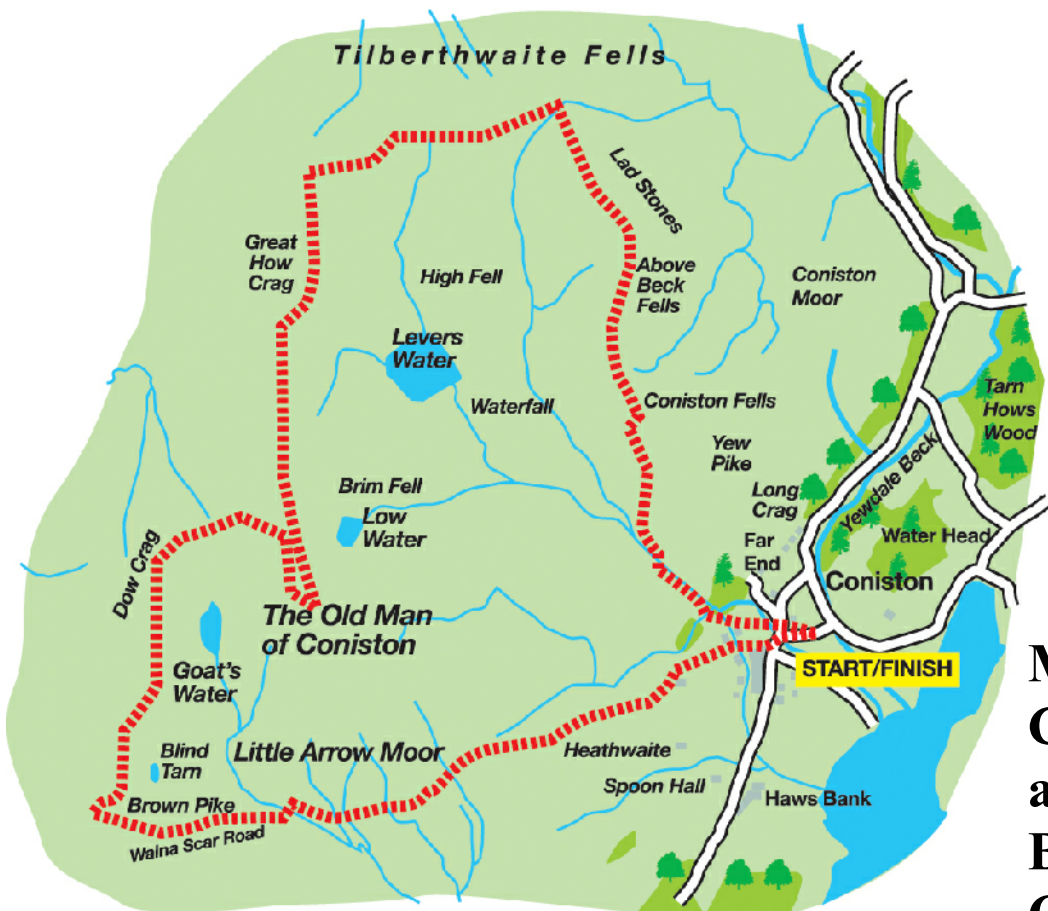
From the village the way is up. Walk by the church and turn left and then a short while later right into Station Road. Continue past the Sun Hotel and follow lane as it turns sharply left. This section of the walk is lined with trees but as you climb higher the lane breaks out into the open to reveal, across fields the massif that constitutes the Coniston range. A mile from the village you reach a car park at the start (or end) of the Walna Scar Road. This pedestrian route to the Duddon Valley was once an important link. No longer a road as such, this rocky track will take you up to the top of the pass between Walna Scar and Brown Pike. In doing so you will skirt about the substantial base of the Old Man. **(Pic 1)** The top of the pass is almost 2000ft above sea level. From here your way is right to the top of Brown Pike. **(Pic 2)** The next section is a ridge walk to take you onto Buck Pike **(Pic 4)** and then Dow Crag 2555ft/778m. Below Blind Tarn will come into sight **(Pic 5)** and Goat's Water. **(Pic 6)**

2. Crag to Wetherlam (6 Km or 4 miles: 2 hours)

What would have been obvious since gaining the ridge is the impressive bulk of Old Man **(Pic 3)** itself across Goat's Water. Pick your way carefully from the summit of Dow Crag to join a path that takes you down to Goat's Hawse. **(Pic 7)** From the hawse **(Pic 8)** take the path that breaks to the right, traversing the flank of Old Man with views back to Dow Crag. **(Pic 9)** The path will take you onto the broad ridge a little way from the summit cairn. Here you may find yourself in a crowd. Coniston Old Man is a very popular fell. Should you wish to curtail your walk at this point then take the main path down past Low Water and return to the village. But this would miss out on one of the finest ridge walks in the Lake District. Retrace your steps to the point where you gained the ridge and then continue to the gentle rise that is Brim Fell (2611ft/796m). **(Pic 10)** Maintaining the same direction aim for Swirl How ahead, which is reached after dropping to Levers Hawse and then ascending past Little and then Great How Crag to the summit. (2630ft/802m) The way now is to descend carefully down Prison Band, to Swirl Hawse. Here you have another opportunity to exit by taking the path leading down to the right. Keep ahead and up to ascend the final summit of the walk, Wetherlam. (2502ft/762m). This summit will give you superlative views over Coniston Water and stretches of Windermere.

3. Wetherlam to Car park (5 Km or 3 miles: 2 hours)

Wainwright makes this point "Considering the popularity of the fell it is remarkable that there are not good paths linking summit and valley...". Picking up the downward path is far from obvious. Looking back towards the Old Man pick up a faint path in grass as it drops southwards. **(Pic 11)** Take the left fork when the path divides and after passing a small tarn, intercept the path over from Tilberthwaite. Here turn right and on a more definite track descend sharply into the valley, a few hundred metres below the youth hostel. **(Pic 12)** On reaching the road turn left. This will take you back to Coniston.

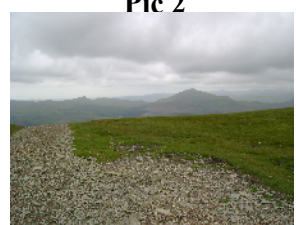


Map by
Chris Wyatt
at the
Blackpool
Gazette

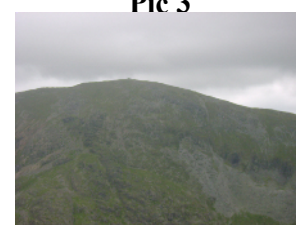
Pic 1



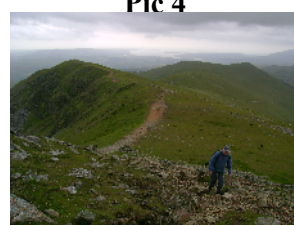
Pic 2



Pic 3



Pic 4



Pic 5



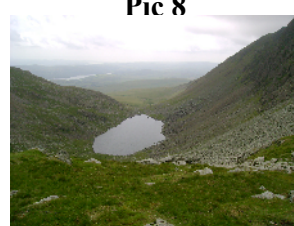
Pic 6



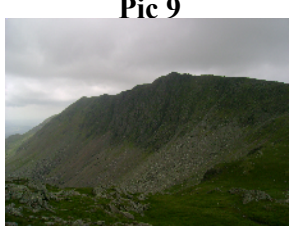
Pic 7



Pic 8



Pic 9



Pic 10



Pic 11



Pic 12

