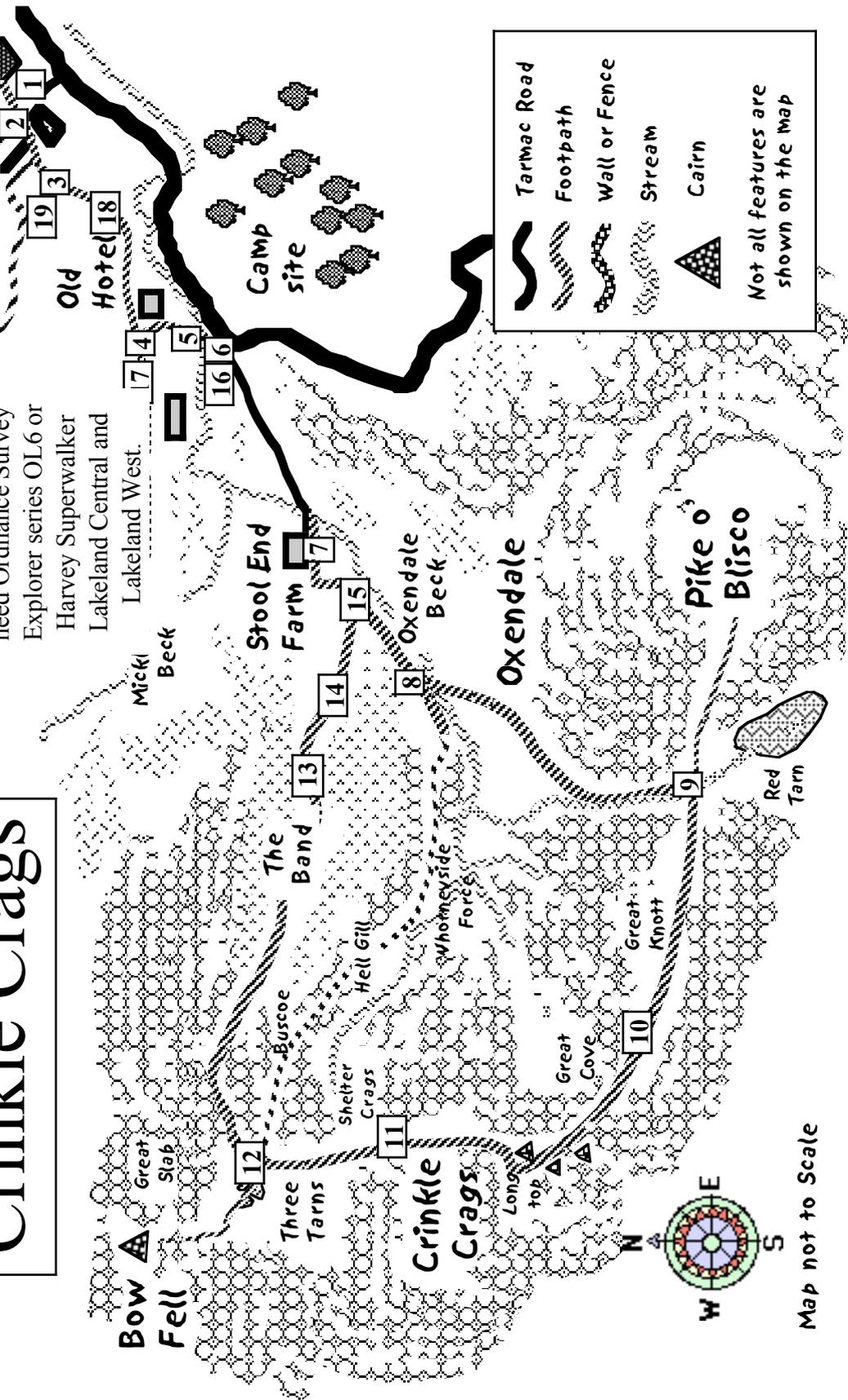


Crinkle Crag

To match this map to a walking map you will need Ordnance Survey Explorer series OL6 or Harvey Superwalker Lakeland Central and Lakeland West.

New Dungeon
Ghyll Hotel

Stickle Cottage



- Tarmac Road
- Footpath
- Wall or Fence
- Stream
- Cairn

Not all features are shown on the map

Map not to Scale

Walk 7

Crinkle Craggs

Length	8.5 miles, 13.6 km.
Height	2,792 ft. 859 metres.
Difficulty	Steep with rough paths and a rough scramble to the top.
Time	4 - 7 hours.
Summits	Crinkle Craggs.
Views	Across the Langdale fells and Scafell range.
Fitness level	Good. The strenuous climb requires stamina and strength.

The first edition of Walks from the New Dungeon Ghyll Hotel featured Pike O' Blisco and Bowfell as it's two main mountain walks. Situated between them is Crinkle Craggs, a well defined and easily identifiable line of small peaks that stands to the south west of Bowfell.

One of the most popular walks amongst experienced and physically fit fellwalkers is the ascent of all three, usually starting with Pike O' Blisco, before dropping down to Red Tarn and ascending Crinkle Craggs. From there it is a short hike to Three Tarns, followed by a steep but ultimately rewarding climb to the summit of Bowfell. The return is via Ore Gap, Angle Tarn and Rossett Gill.

Here, however, we are simply going to address the middle leg of that walk, Crinkle Craggs. For the not so experienced it is a challenge in itself, and you will need a good level of fitness to complete it. Nor is it without it's problems, as you will find out as soon as you tell any experienced fell walker that you are about to undertake it for the first time.

"You'll like 'Bad Step'!" they'll tell you, smiling, or enquire "which way round you going?", often without telling you why it matters.

So that you may be prepared for their questions, here is a good indication of what you can expect on your day out on Crinkle Craggs.

First of all, pick a good day weather wise. The views on this walk are amongst the finest you will find anywhere in the Lake District. Secondly, don't expect to be alone. The paths up Crinkle Craggs are well worn with the many thousands of boots that tramp along them every year. Don't be put off by that statement, it won't be like Oxford Street on a Saturday morning, but you are unlikely to find total solitude here.

Expect your day out to also linger in the memory. I have climbed all of Lakeland's peaks, and followed most low level routes, and one of the most memorable walks I

have ever taken was my first foray onto Crinkle Crag. I can even remember what I had in my sandwiches that day!

Your walk will start, as all really good walks should, with a mile of fairly level ground. This is good for warming up the muscles and getting your heart beating. Then it is on to the serious business of climbing to Red Tarn via Browney Gill, before veering off right to pass by Great Knott and over the Crag. The rocky terrain can be hard on the feet, but the experience of walking what is, in effect, a roller coaster ridge of small peaks, should live on in the memory long after your feet have recovered. When you are up there they do not seem so small, but this is a walk where you need to take your time and enjoy yourself, at least on your first visit.

As for “Bad Step”, well let us just say that it makes a memorable addition to the day. Some walkers nonchalantly declare that it is “not so bad”, whilst others are not afraid to admit that they took the easy route around it. Whichever you choose, it should not hinder your progress. The only choice you have is whether to clamber up it, or walk around the side. By the way, we are doing the walk clockwise as “Bad Step” is easier to negotiate that way.

The return is via the Band, a pleasant downhill stroll after the rigours of the day.

1. Turn right out of the hotel and go through a wooden gate leading into the field to the right of Stickle Cottage. Bear left to a wide gap in the wall about 100 yds. away.
2. Bear left to follow a rough, rocky track behind the buildings, up a slope. Care is needed in winter here. Ignore all paths running off to the right or left. After a quarter of a mile cross a wooden footbridge and bear left and then right immediately afterwards.
3. Pass through a kissing gate and follow the path, with walls on either side, until you reach the rear of the Old Dungeon Ghyll Hotel.
4. Go through a kissing gate situated to the left of a farm gate, then, keeping the wall to your left drop down the slope to a wide track. Cross the wide track to take a narrow path flanked by a fence down the hill towards the houses below.
5. At the end of the path go through a gate, cross the road and go through another gate into a small field. Cross the field to another gate leading to a bridge.
6. Go over the bridge and walk the short distance to the main road, then turn right to follow the farm access road leading to Stool End Farm.
7. Go past the farm buildings, keeping them to your right and following the signs, then go through a gate on to a wide track towards Oxendale. Ignore the right hand junction a little further on, but continue on the wide track until you reach

a bridge over the beck.

8. Cross the bridge and follow the well made path as it starts to climb the fell. Recent erosion control work has vastly improved this path, which gets progressively steeper as you climb. As Browney Gill, the stream tumbling down the hillside to your right, gets closer to the path, so the incline gets steeper, and in parts it resembles a staircase, in others the erosion control has been less successful and you may need to do a little scrambling. As you struggle up the fell side, bear in mind that this is one walk where a large amount of the serious climbing is during these early stages. There is more scrambling to come later, but it is a good deal more fun than the unrelenting ascent of Browney Gill.
9. Once at the top of Browney Gill you will be greeted by the sight of Red Tarn. You will reach a cross roads of paths, with the route up Pike O'Blisco to your left, and the path up Crinkle Craggs to your right. Simply turn right and follow the well worn path up towards Crinkle Craggs.

There are no prizes for guessing how Red Tarn got it's name. The deep brown colour of the water, and the rocks hereabouts, are evidence enough. The rock is Heamatite, a form of iron ore once common in Cumbria. The Heamatite mines at Hodbarrow, close to Millom on the coast, were the largest in the world. They supplied huge quantities of iron and steel to the Barrow Shipbuilding industry.

The workings at Red Tarn and also at Ore Gap, which is on the opposite side of Bowfell, were much smaller in scale, but no less important to the miners that worked them. It was not so much a mine as a quarry. The ore was worked from the surface, then transported down the mountainside on large wooden sleds to be smelted.

10. Crinkle Craggs is not so much a single summit as a rocky ridge of 5 small craggy peaks. Nor is there simply one path to follow. The fact is that, over the years, several paths have been created by a mixture of fellwalkers and rain erosion. Depending upon your ability and nerve you will probably either choose the lower level path, which is relatively easy to follow with few obstacles to hold you up, or you will want to get closer to the top of the ridge, which is where you will meet the infamous "Bad Step". In truth "Bad Step" has a reputation that is probably greater than it deserves. Situated in a gully between the first and second peaks, or "crinkle tops" as they are sometimes known, it is a rocky scramble of no more than 18 feet high, up which the fitter and more adventurous walkers love to go. Those who are daunted by the prospect can take a small diversion to the left from where it is possible to make the ascent of the second peak. Whichever you decide, and you really should not make a decision until you get there, spare a thought for those coming in the

opposite direction, and particularly that small number of walkers who know not of it's existence.

The atmosphere on Crinkle Crag is quite unique. As you traverse the rocky landscape, with spectacular mountain views all around, you get a feeling that you truly are remote from the modern world and all it's problems. You are surrounded on all sides by rock, with few signs of human habitation. In fact it is only the presence of other walkers that keeps you from experiencing that unique feeling of total solitude.

For some walkers being alone on a rocky peak such as Crinkle Crag is the ultimate goal. This was certainly the case for Alfred Wainwright, who sought to enjoy the magnificent splendour of the Lakeland Fells in peace and solitude. He liked nothing more than to sit alone on a rocky peak, admiring the view and enjoying a pipe full of tobacco as he drank in the beauty that surrounded him.

When he first started to climb the Lakeland fells, long before he wrote and published his pictorial guides, peace and solitude was doubtless to be found on many of the high peaks in Lakeland, Crinkle Crag included. As fell walking increased in popularity, and the Lakeland fells became more accessible, places where one could find total solitude became increasingly difficult to find.

This is fine if, like me, you enjoy sharing the fells with other enthusiasts. If you revel in the genial banter between groups of fellwalkers meeting atop a mountain, or at a favourite lunch stop, then the loss of peace and solitude is more than compensated for by the warmth and friendliness of those you meet during your day on the fells.

But if, like Wainwright, you really don't like to be disturbed in your search for peace and quiet and the appearance of a noisy group of walkers interrupts one of those special moments when you feel totally at peace with the world, think carefully before you complain about the intrusion. One of the reasons why the fells became so assessable and so popular is that people like you and me read about them in Wainwright's pictorial guides. So well written were those wonderful little books that, having read them, we wanted to experience the mountains for ourselves. The moral of the story is very simple. If you don't want to disturb the peace and tranquility of the Lakeland Fells, don't write a best selling guide book!

11. After you have walked, scrambled, ascended and descended each peak in turn follow the clear path down the ridge to descend to Three Tarns. In front of you will be Bowfell. At Three Tarns turn right, and locate a path that runs beside an apology for a stream which trickles out of one of the tarns. There are

actually two paths leading down the fell from close to this point. The one closest to Crinkle Crag takes the route down Hell Gill, whilst the other, which is closer to Bowfell and considerably more popular, heads down to the Band. It is this second, more popular path, that our route takes. It runs beside the stream, which grows from a trickle to something considerably more substantial as it descends the fell. The footpath veers away from it and becomes clear and easy to follow. Like the path up Browney Gill, there has been a lot of erosion control work here and the path is equally steep and rocky so great care is needed.

12. You are now heading down the fell towards The Band. The path is broad and although rocky underfoot is not too steep and for almost a mile you'll enjoy a very pleasant downhill section with open grassy fells on both sides of you.
13. After a fairly level section the path starts to drop steeply down the fellside again, and Stool End Farm appears in the distance. The path then bears right down bracken covered fellside to arrive at a dry stone wall and a kissing gate.
14. Go through the kissing gate. A few yards to your left is a seat and memorial stone set in the wall. I like to take a rest here, enjoy a drink and take in the view before the final steep and rocky descent along the clear path to Stool End Farm.
15. At the bottom the path joins a wider farm track. Bear left here and follow the track to Stool End. When you reach the farm go through a gate and pass by the farm house, following the signs, and walk down the metalled road until you reach a junction with the main road down the valley.
16. Turn left, along a driveway over a bridge to some houses. Walk over the bridge to a gate. Go through and cross the small field to a kissing gate. Go through, cross a road and go through the next kissing gate. Walk up a narrow path to a junction with a wide track. Cross the track and follow the wall to your right up the slope to a gate with an adjoining kissing gate.
17. Go through the gate and follow the walled track along the side of the slope. This is a rocky and undulating footpath. Do not turn off either right or left.
18. After a quarter of a mile go through a kissing gate. After another quarter of a mile cross a wooden bridge. Continue on until the New Dungeon Hotel appears in the distance. The last part of this section is stony, with a steep, rocky slope to walk down.
19. Go through a gap in a wall and bear right across a small field to a gate. Go through to find yourself beside Stickle Cottage, with the New Dungeon Ghyll Hotel just beyond.