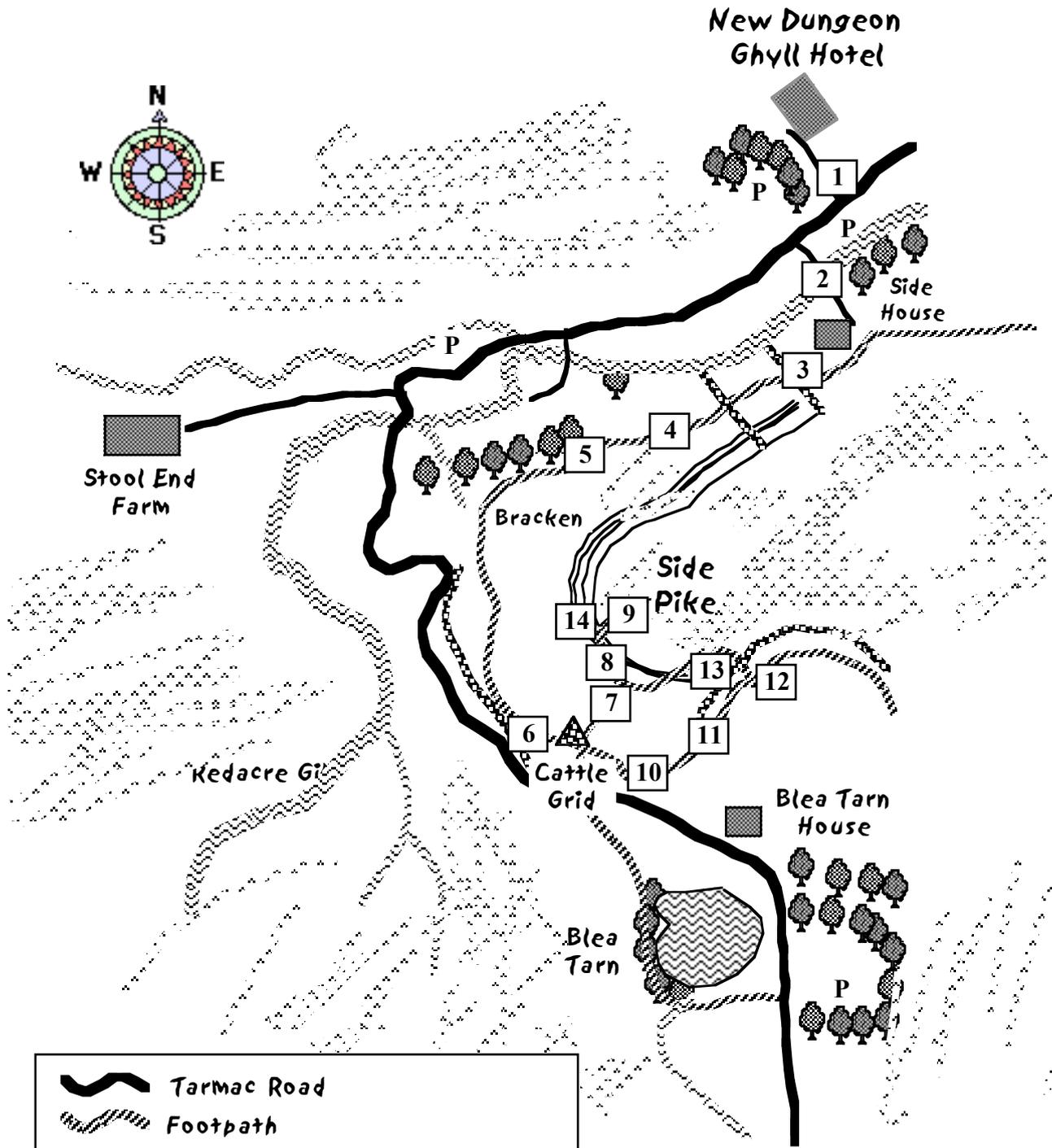


Side Pike



	Tarmac Road		
	Footpath		
	Wall or Fence		Car Park
	Stream		
	Cairn		Map not to Scale
Not all features are shown on the map			

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

Walk 2

Side Pike

Length	3 - 3.75 miles, 4.8 - 6 km.
Height	1,176 ft, 362 metres.
Difficulty	Moderate. The route up is quite steep in places, and navigation close to the fell top is not easy. The “Fat Man’s Agony” option is not for the inexperienced or faint hearted.
Time	2 - 3 hours
Summits	Side Pike
Views	Fine views of the head of the valley.
Fitness level	Good stamina required. This is a good walk for those working up to something bigger or longer.

A video, titled “Side Pike”, featuring a short walk from Blea Tarn to Side Pike is now on the jonathancraigguides You Tube channel. It can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s2Zw0P81C74>

To most people, the term “The Langdale Pikes” is simply a collective name for the two distinctive mountain tops situated on the northern edge of the Langdale Valley. Harrison Stickle, which towers above New Dungeon Ghyll, and Pike O’ Stickle a little further down the valley, are known the world over as the Langdale Pikes, and it is a fact that even some experienced fell walkers get their actual names mixed up. However, the valley has more than just the two famous pikes. On the south side of the Great Langdale Valley stands the smallest, Side Pike.

It’s small stature and the ease with which it is climbed may make it less attractive to experienced fell walkers, but the fact is that Side Pike should never be ignored. The views from the top of this fine little peak are amongst the best in the valley.

We have a choice of two routes up. The easy way, followed by most walkers, particularly those who take to the fells on fine summer evenings; and the “Fat Man’s Agony” route, an entertaining, if considerably more dangerous, option for those seeking a little extra excitement on their walk.

The easy route is only easy if you are relatively fit, as the climb can be steep in parts and not without it’s problems. The “Fat Man’s Agony” route is not for the faint hearted, featuring a tight squeeze between the rock face followed by a short section of nerve jangling ledge with a 300 ft sheer drop just 4 feet away. Both routes are described here. Which one you decide to take will depend upon your experience and nerve, however, one thing is certain:- pick a fine day for this walk and the effort required to reach the summit will be well rewarded.

Both routes share the first portion of the walk.

1. Turn left out of the hotel and walk to the end of the lane. Turn right down the road, then after 250 yards turn left onto the farm track to Side House, signed “Public Footpath Oak Howe 1 mile”.
2. Walk along the farm road, going over a bridge and through a gate, until you get to the buildings. Bear left to a kissing gate, keeping the farm house to your right. Go through and walk over a wooden bridge, then turn right, on to a barely visible path that leads towards a ladder stile over a wall at the far end of the field.
3. Cross the ladder stile, which has a small stream in front of it, and follow the path across the fields. Cross another wall by a ladder stile, and a little further on go over another wall. Keep the camp site to your right, and note the appearance of Side Pike above you and to your left.
4. After crossing the last wall, bear left and walk diagonally up the slope. The path is not visible on the ground at this point. Head towards a small conifer plantation surrounded by a barbed wire fence. Keep the plantation to your right.
5. Walk along the edge of the plantation and go through a kissing gate, then bear left through a narrow path in the bracken up the side of the fell. The path climbs steeply to join up with a footpath that runs up the hill with a wall to it’s right. The path is steep, but has been the subject of recent erosion control work and is easy to see. At the top you will reach a gate on to the road that links Gt. Langdale and Little Langdale, a quarter of a mile from Blea Tarn.
6. When you get to the gate you need to decide which route you want to take up Side Pike (see introduction), the easy route up the fell, which is quite steep, or the more difficult “Fat man’s agony” route, which is just as steep, but has an element of added excitement.
7. **For the easy route,** At the kissing gate, do not go through, but turn left to follow a narrow path marked by cairns as it climbs the fell. The path is steep and rocky in places and care is required. As you climb the view of Blea Tarn to your right is superb.
8. When you reach the top the ground levels out somewhat and you are faced with a section of level walking, however, beware, as the ground is rocky and bumpy underfoot. The path picks its way between sections of rocky ground and boggy patches. A line of cairns marks the route, but in the summer when the grass is high these are not always visible. In the distance the summit of Side Pike can clearly be seen.

9. The final ascent of Side Pike is by the footpath that runs up the northern edge, which as you approach is on the left of the peak. Again, it is steep, with tufts of grass hiding rocks upon which the unwary can easily sprain an ankle.
- 10. For the “Fat Man’s Agony route”** (Note that this route has an added element of danger. Greater care than normal is required at all times.) Go through the gate, cross the cattle grid, and walk along the narrow road.
11. After a quarter of a mile the wall to your left ends. Locate a path a little further on, ascending the fell. Climb this path. Side Pike will be to your left now.
12. Continue up the fell, almost to a junction with another wall, then locate a stile in the fence to your left, apparently leading to a rock face and little else.
13. Cross the stile and follow the narrow path up to the rock face, bearing left when you reach it. At first you will think that there is no way through. You are faced by a narrow gap in the rock, and, seemingly, a steep precipice on the other side. Squeeze between the gap in the rock, then carefully edge along the ledge and bear right around the rock face. The drop on your left disappears and the path leads up the fell to your right. Follow it round to the top of Side Pike.
- 14. To return.** You are not advised to return via the fat man’s agony route, but to retrace the easy route to the bottom of the fell and then simply follow the outward path back to the hotel.

There are a number of “Fat man’s agony” routes in the Lake District, each one consisting of a narrow gap between the rocks, often with a steep drop or some other kind of obstacle on the other side. The term was coined in Victorian times, when the wealthy were the only people who could afford to visit the remoter parts of the Lake District. Guides would take them on walks to local viewpoints

Since many visitors were not only wealthy, but also well fed, the term “Fat man’s agony” came into use. There are a number of stories about plump visitors who got stuck between the rocks and who then had to be rescued from their predicament, however, these seem to be nothing more than local folklore with little basis in truth. Many of the stories tell of wealthy young ladies who became stuck fast and who were set free by handsome and muscular young shepherds, who they later thanked with a nice reward, or the promise of marriage (or whatever!).

One extremely wealthy and rather plump young spinster is even reputed to have been stuck between the rocks on Side Pike, rescued and then returned to the rock to deliberately get herself wedged firmly again in order that the handsome young farm hand who had rescued her the first time would once again come to her aid!