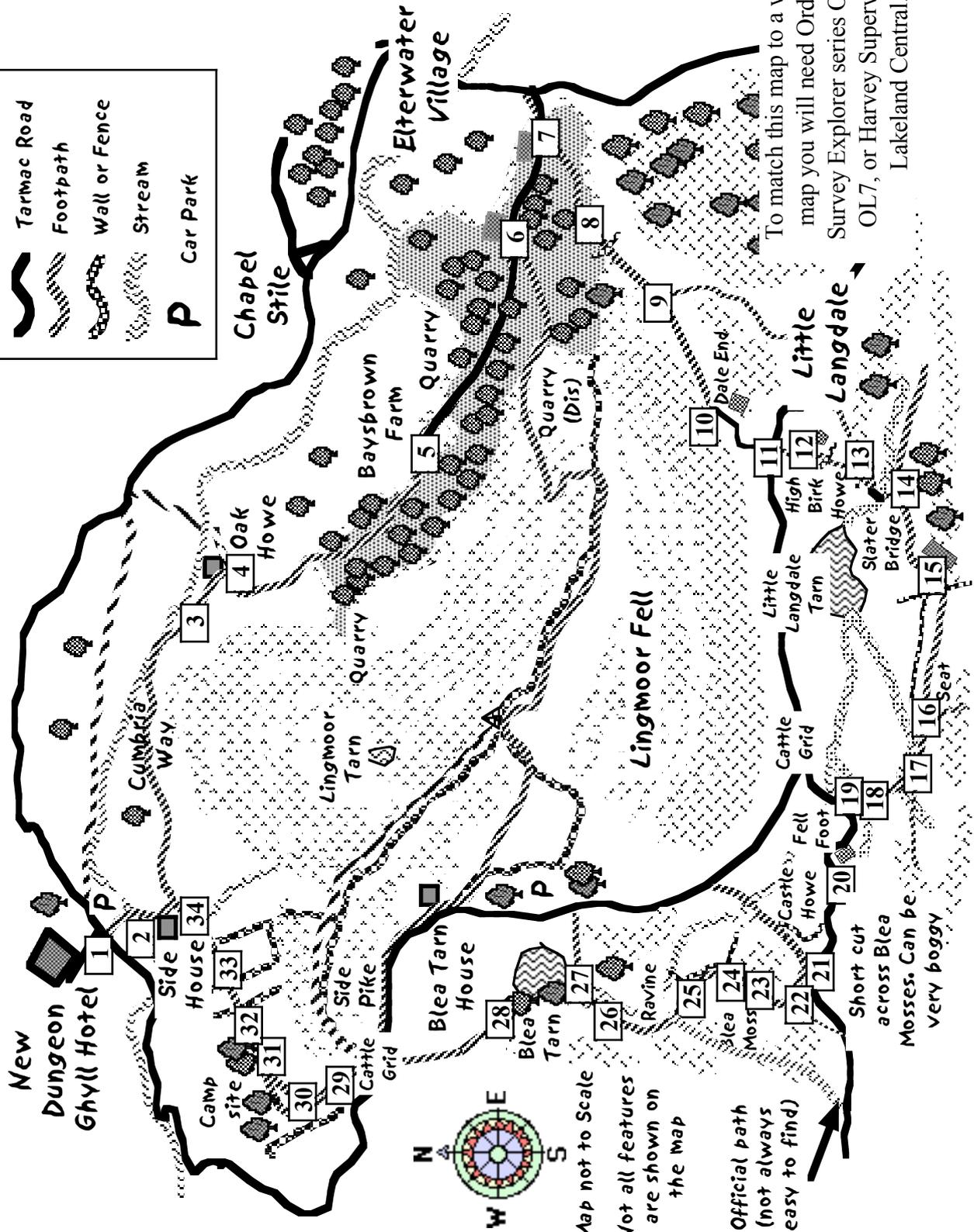
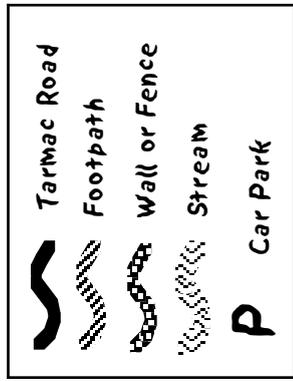


# Slaters Bridge



To match this map to a walking map you will need Ordnance Survey Explorer series OL6 and OL7, or Harvey Superwalker Lakeland Central.

## Walk 5

# Slaters Bridge

Length	8.25 miles, 13.2 km.
Height	Highest point reached, 732 ft, 225 metres.
Difficulty	Moderate. The outward journey is along rough track, road and pasture, The return is across boggy ground before passing by Blea Tarn. The return leg of this walk is very difficult during or after very wet weather.
Time	4 - 6 hours. (Add extra hour if visiting Cathedral Cave).
Summits	None.
Views	A fine view over Little Langdale Tarn, with Lingmoor in the distance, is the highlight.
Fitness level	Good stamina required.

The Valleys of Great and Little Langdale are separated by Lingmoor, the hump backed ridge that runs from Elterwater to Blea Tarn. Little Langdale has it's share of impressive mountain scenery, just like it's northerly sister, and it also has a very pleasant tarn, as well as one of the most appealing bridges in Lakeland.

This walk takes us around Lingmoor and on to Little Langdale Tarn via Slaters Bridge. You are strongly advised not to forget your camera, as it is worth the effort just to see the the bridge, and whatever the weather you will want to photograph this quaintly unique piece of Lakeland architecture. (or should that be engineering?).

Part of the return is over Blea Mosses, which during or after very wet weather becomes extremely boggy and difficult to cross. An alternative is to walk from Little Langdale to Blea Tarn via the minor road. However the route described here crosses Blea Mosses and also features a wonderful little hidden gorge that is totally missed by the hundreds of motorised tourists that pass this way each day. Blea Tarn, with it's impressive backdrop of the Langdale Pikes, makes a perfect place to stop for a well earned drink before the final downhill section back to the hotel.

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 left, following the route of the Cumbria Way footpath. After going through a kissing gate at the top of the slope the path levels off, however, it is still stony in parts, and is

crossed by a couple of becks as they tumble down the hillside. In parts it can get quite boggy after wet weather

3. Eventually the path joins up with an overgrown narrow stone lane, with walls on both sides. Follow the lane to a barn at Oak Howe. Locate a footpath turning right, just before the barn, signed "Baysbrown 3/4 mile"
4. Go right here, walking away from the farm and towards Hag Wood. The walk through the mixed deciduous woods is very pleasant.
5. As the trees thin out the path joins an old quarry track and Baysbrown Farm appears on your left. Walk past the farm and continue straight ahead along the metalled track through Baysbrown Wood until you reach a house on your left.
6. Ignore the house, and the cross roads of paths just after, which is signed for Little Langdale. Instead, continue along the road until you reach another house, named "Ullet Nest."
7. Just after the house is a junction with an old road. Turn right here, up the rough track, following the sign for "Footpath Little Langdale:"
8. Continue along the track, ignoring all other paths right and left, as it climbs gently along the side of the fell. Go through a gate and continue along as the woodland retreats and the views of the Little Langdale Valley open up in front of you and to the left.
9. At a junction of paths go straight on, following the sign for Little Langdale Tarn. Stay on the main track as it bears left to drop down the fell towards Dale End Farm.
10. At Dale End the track turns to tarmac road. Follow the lane, with wire fences on either side, down to its junction with the main road through the valley.
11. When you reach the main road turn left and cross to a farm access road on the other side, with a roughly painted sign on the fence saying "Birk Howe Farm, no parking on roadway" Another yellow arrow sign points the way, reading "public footpath only". As you walk down the road towards the farm you get superb views of Little Langdale Tarn to your right.
12. When you reach the farm yard, turn right, through a gate. A slate sign on the wall points the way to "Slaters Bridge". Follow the path through another gate and across the top of the next field, keeping the wall to your left.
13. Go through a kissing gate and follow the well worn path down the slope to Slaters Bridge. Across the fell you can clearly see the remains of the slate quarries in Moss Rigg Wood.

**The name Slaters Bridge is derived from it's use, or rather those who used it, the slate quarrymen of Little Langdale . It lies on an old track**

that ran from the village of Little Langdale, to the slate quarries in Moss Rigg Wood. It looks ancient, but is actually 17th Century.

Along with farming, Slate quarrying is possibly the oldest of all the traditional industries of the Lake District. The Romans used Lakeland slate in a number of forts, and when they left the local population quarried slate in order to provide themselves with a cheap and durable building material, although it's use was not universal.

Early workings were small affairs, and it wasn't until the building revolution of the 17th century that slate quarrying became a major industry. When Sir Christopher Wren used slate for the roof of Kensington Palace the material became highly fashionable, and the future of the slate industry was assured.

Slate quarries grew up all over the district, and the belt of rock that runs from Elterwater to Coniston was particularly profitable. The quarry in Moss Rigg Wood was one of the most extensive, and although it has long since been abandoned, the remains can still be seen. Nowadays it is known to locals and walkers alike as Cathedral Cave.

Currently owned by the National Trust, Cathedral Cave is reached via a tunnel in the rock, at the other end of which is a superb Man Made cavern with a large central pillar. This cavern then leads on to further workings, and another tunnel, which is generally unsafe.

Although it is not on the route of this walk, Cathedral Cave is so close by that a short detour to explore it is possible. At instruction 14, instead of turning right onto the rough track, turn left, walk a short distance, go through a gate, then walk a little further until you come to a path on the right that leads up a slope to reach the lower level of the mines and the entrance to a tunnel. This path is not signed. Go through the tunnel to find yourself in the main cavern.

At the entrance to the tunnel note the National Trust sign advising that you enter at your own risk. It is a fact that, although accessible to the public the area cannot be guaranteed safe. Rain water erosion, coupled with the destabilising effect of plants and trees growing on the rock face, contributes to the general instability of the rock. Add to that the effect of human intrusion, as fell walkers and cave explorers clamber over every nook and cranny and it is easy to see why rock falls are not uncommon. That having been said, many hundreds of people explore the area every year, and return to tell the tale! Just remember to be careful. You enter the caves at your own risk. To return to the walk, just retrace your steps to Slaters Bridge.

14. Follow the path over the bridge to a gate leading to a rough track. Turn right on the track and continue along, with superb views over the tarn and across the valley to your left.
15. Continue along, past Low Hall Garth and on through a gate. A little further on from the gate is a seat on your left hand side, which makes an excellent place to stop for lunch and simply watch the world go by for half an hour.
16. Just past the seat is a junction from the left. Ignore it, continuing along the track main track with it's fine views.
17. At a fork in the track bear right, following the track as it runs to the left of a lakeland stone wall. Go through a kissing gate and on down the hill. The track gets progressively harder to walk here, as the small stones are replaced by larger pebbles which move readily underfoot.
18. Go past a house and over a bridge, then through a gate to follow a much better track towards the main road in the distance.
19. When you reach the main road, turn left. (If the weather is, or has been, very wet, turn right here, walk to the next junction, then turn left to follow the tarmac road to Blea Tarn).
20. Walk along the road, past Fell Foot and on up the slope. The small hill on your right is Castle Howe.
21. A short way up the hill, locate a footpath sign on the right. You are not going to follow this path, as it points across the valley back to the road. However, it marks the point where an unofficial path leaves the road to head across Blea Mosses. A narrow path runs through the bracken down the hill. Note that on the Ordnance Survey map this path is marked as starting further along the road, and is a much dryer option. It is better to use the official path but it is sometimes difficult to locate as it is not well used.
22. If taking the unofficial path beware of the boggy ground, which is quite bad at the bottom where the path crosses a small beck. It is not possible to see the path at this point, but you can see it emerging half way up the opposite fell side. You can also see a wall climbing up the other side of the fell. The footpath that you are aiming for runs to the left of the wall.
23. A good reference point as you follow the faint path towards the wall is an old sheep fold, which is to the right of the path, and a curious metal object that stands upright to the left of the path. It is anyone's idea as to what it is, or how long it has been there. Suggestions on a post card please!
24. As you get to the wall the path gets much clearer. The walking is quite rough at times, with large, loose rocks underfoot.

25. Continue on until the wall ends and the path starts to run beside a very pleasant hidden gorge.
26. Past the gorge, the path crosses a rocky stream. There is no bridge so care is required if the water level is high. The path then continues along the fell. The ground here is rocky and the path easy to see. After crossing another stream the path heads up towards a group of fir trees. These are the trees that border Blea Tarn, which is just a short distance further on.
27. Eventually you will come to a gate in a stone wall, beyond which is Blea Tarn. Follow the path through the gate and down to a bridge, then turn left to walk along the western shore of the tarn.
28. Go through a kissing gate, which marks the unofficial boundary beyond which the motor tourists seldom tread, and follow the rough but easy to see path across the fell side until you reach the public road again. Cross the road and go through the gate then bear left to walk down the hill. This path is easy to see as it has recently been subject to erosion control work.
29. Follow the path down the fellside, keeping Side Pike to your right. The path gets progressively steeper as you descend.
30. As you approach the bottom of the hill locate a narrow path forking away to your right through the bracken. Don't worry if you can't locate it, the path is the line of a short cut that avoids you having to walk to the bottom of the field. If you miss it, walk to the bottom of the field, turn right and walk across the end of the field, with the wall/fence on your left. The fields of Great Langdale Camp site will be over the wall and beyond the trees to your left.
31. Go through a kissing gate and follow the path along the side of a conifer plantation fenced with barbed wire. At the corner of the plantation bear left to follow a faint path diagonally down the slope. You are aiming for a path that crosses over a wall, but at this point you won't actually be able to see the wall. The ground here is quite boggy, and the path not easy to see. Keep a large rock to your left, and aim for the far corner of the field until the wall comes into view, then head for the wall.
32. Go over the wall, then follow the path as it cuts across the fields, becoming progressively more visible with every step, until you reach a ladder stile in the wall. Cross over and continue on until you reach another ladder stile. From the top of this stile you can clearly see Side House ahead of you.
33. Cross the stile and the stream beyond and follow the path to a wooden bridge beside Side House.
34. Go over the bridge and turn left. Go through a kissing gate and onto the driveway to the house. Walk to the main road, turn right and return to the hotel.