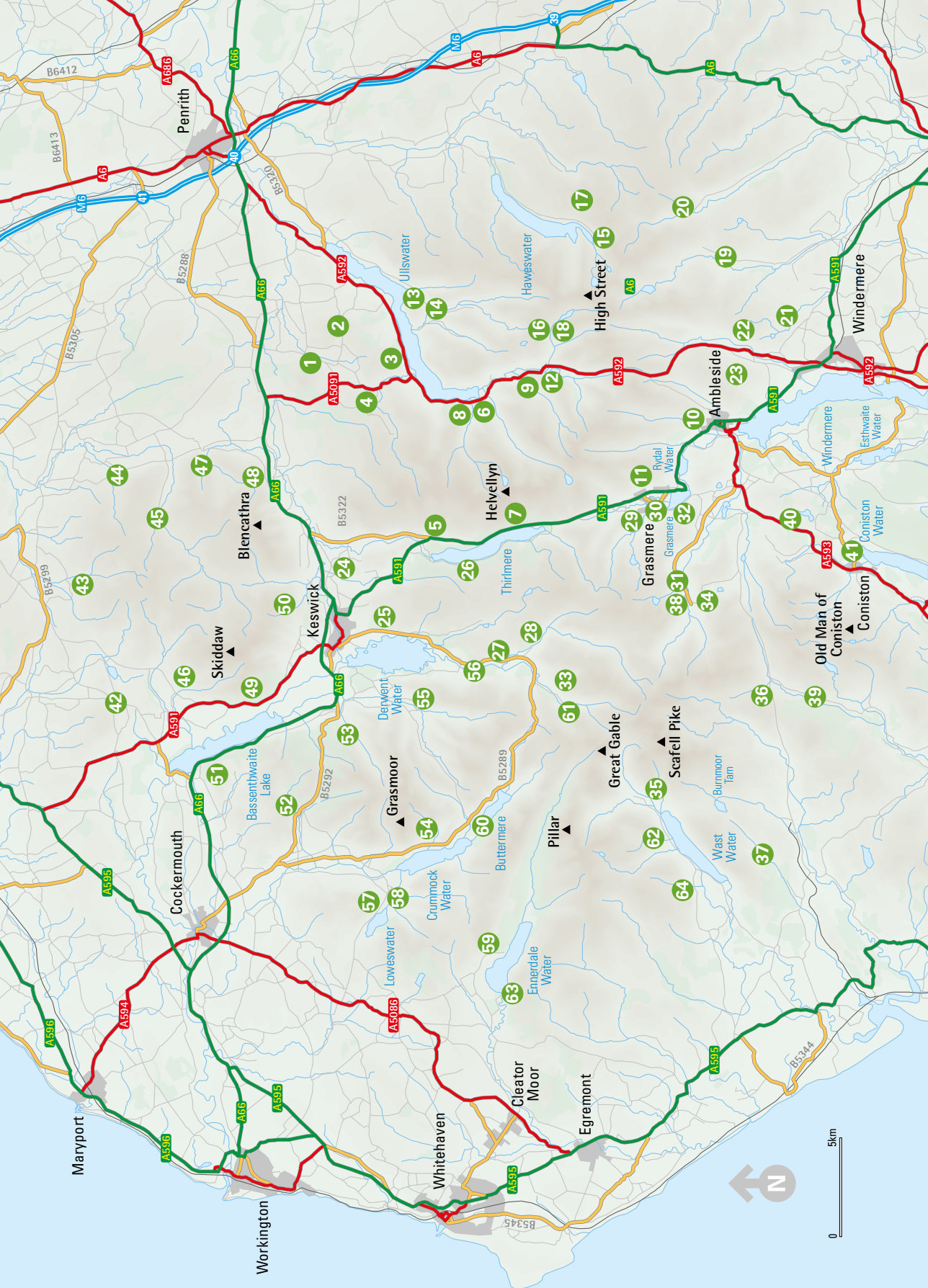


A woman in a red jacket and yellow leggings is climbing a rocky mountain path. She is holding a camera and a tripod. The background shows a large mountain with a green and brown landscape under a cloudy sky.

# Walking the Wainwrights

64 WALKS TO CLIMB THE 214 WAINWRIGHTS OF LAKELAND

*Graham Uney*



0 5km



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## About the Author

Graham Uney

Graham has been exploring the fells of the Lake District and beyond for nearly 40 years. As well as working as a guide book author and writer, he also runs his own mountain skills business, Graham Uney Mountaineering. He is a highly qualified mountaineering instructor, and a provider of the Mountain Leader award, amongst other professional qualifications, and also offers guided walks, navigation courses, and courses for rock climbers and winter mountaineers. Full details of Graham's courses can be found on his website [www.grahamuneymountaineering.co.uk](http://www.grahamuneymountaineering.co.uk).

Graham recently spent five years working for the Lake District National Park Authority as a Helvellyn Fell Top Assessor, and has also worked for a number of environmental charities as an ecological surveyor. He lives at the foot of Haweswater in the Lake District with his partner, Sharon Kennedy, and their dogs, Bob and Bert.

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📷 Looking down Borrowdale to Castle Crag and Grange Fell, with Skiddaw in the distance (Walk 33).



# Introduction

From Red Gate the way looked boggy but straightforward. Even then, during early May 1988, there was a path of sorts, and even then, before I knew anything about erosion, I could see that this path was wet and black with peat.

The mist that had dogged me on High Pike was clearing, and beyond the rocky tumps of Miton Hill and Round Knott I could just see towards my final peak, Carrock Fell. I reached its top in the early afternoon, but didn't linger. The view had been swallowed by more descending mist, and a cold wind was blowing from the north. A path promised a way down via The Trough, and I moved off, valley-bound. The whole event was now mentally logged in my growing experience of mountain days. A slight anticlimax, but satisfying, nevertheless.

On the way home that night, I thought about what I'd achieved and what might fill my weekends in the future. I'd been exploring the fells of the Lake District for about 5 years, since my early teens, and during the previous winter I'd decided to make a list of the Wainwrights I'd climbed over the years. Although for a while I'd been aware of the seven guidebooks written by Alfred Wainwright, each one a Pictorial Guide to the Lakeland Fells, I'd never really given much thought to climbing all the mountains that Wainwright so carefully, lovingly, perhaps obsessively depicted within each volume. Wainwright's guidebooks are, even after fifty or sixty-odd years, well known around the world, even if a lot of the actual fells he cherished are barely known to walkers today. Within those seven volumes Alfred Wainwright devoted a chapter to each individual fell within the range. Each fell enjoyed a short introduction, a page on the natural features of that fell, then individual pages on each approach to the summit of the hill. More pages detailed the summit features, the view from each top, and possible ridge walks. But the true staggering beauty of the Wainwright guidebooks are the illustrations. Every single page is adorned with stunning, painstakingly hand-drawn, pen and ink works of art. And within those seven volumes Alfred Wainwright described all the possible ways of climbing no less than 214 of the hills within the Lake District. From memory, when I did a rough count of how many I'd completed by that wintertime, I think it was somewhere round about the 180 mark. In the exuberance of youth, I decided to finish the list. To climb all 214 Wainwrights.

So, heading home that night, my heart was full of mixed feelings. Carrock Fell that day had been my final Wainwright. I'd completed all 214 fells of the Lake District. What now? Well, I'd done all of them once, and a few more than once. A couple of these fells I'd climbed quite a few times, and by different routes. The obvious answer to that question seemed to be that I would just carry on enjoying the hills, and not worry about whether they were on a list or not.

Thirty-some years later, as I write, I've completed five full rounds of all the Wainwrights, and am very close to finishing a sixth round. Of course, many of these hills are now old familiar friends. I'm fortunate that my work as a mountaineering instructor takes me into these hills almost every day, and for five years I worked for the Lake District National Park Authority as their winter Fell Top Assessor on Helvellyn, a role that saw me climbing Helvellyn every day to take weather readings, assess the snow and ice conditions, and to write a daily report for Lake

📷 Leaving the Beacon on Thornthwaite Crag (Walk 18).



District Weatherline. As a consequence, I'm well beyond being on nodding terms only with some of these fells. I've climbed Helvellyn over 600 times now, and lots of other summits have been trodden by my boots over 40 times.

This book is my way of encouraging people to get out into the hills of the Lake District. But explore too the hills of Wales, the Peak District, Yorkshire Dales, North Pennines, Southern Uplands, and the Scottish Highlands and Islands – there are more than enough out there to fill a lifetime. Go out on sunny days, but once you've gained in experience, have the right clothing and equipment and know how to use it, go out in rain and snow too. With good navigation skills you can enjoy night-time ascents, while with an understanding of the Leave no Trace ethics, wild camping on the fells is one of the finest ways to appreciate our mountains.

Why do we need a guide book on the fells of the Lake District if Wainwright wrote seven of them? Well, I should say right here that this book is not intended to replace Wainwright's Pictorial Guides. They are superb books. But, they were written in the 1950s and 60s, and yes, some things in the hills have changed in the intervening years. Another reason is that many walkers struggle to devise full-day walks using the Wainwright guide books. Yes, he has detailed pretty much every conceivable way of getting to each individual summit, but this leaves the reader having to then come up with their own plan to make a longer day of it by continuing over one or more other fells. Wainwright didn't describe day walks in these seven guidebooks. He described individual ways up and down each one. So, please buy the Wainwright guidebooks if you haven't got them on your bookshelves already. Just use them alongside this book.

In this book you'll find 64 routes that, if you complete them all, by default you will also have completed the Wainwrights. A few of the summits are featured in more than one walk. That's ok. You can do them more than once!

There are other lists of hills, aside from the Wainwrights. These include the Birketts, Nuttalls, Hewitts, and Marilyns, and there are more. I've written this guidebook based on completing the Wainwrights, simply because I think these are the fells that most new hillwalkers are likely to be aware of. By doing the Wainwrights you'll also be walking a lot of the Birketts, Nuttalls, Hewitts and the rest. Maybe once you've completed the Wainwrights you'll decide to go on to complete these other lists of hills too. That would be a great way to keep enjoying the hills.

## A short note about mountain safety

Anyone heading into the hills should aim to be self-reliant. Have the right clothing and boots, a map and compass, a torch, food for the day, and a mobile phone. Know how to use the map and compass. There are countless courses available for you to learn essential skills for the hills. In the Lake District we are fortunate in having a very good Mountain Rescue Team network, and they can be called upon to help in the event of an accident by dialling 999 and asking for the Police, then Mountain Rescue, but this should be a last resort.

📷 On the classic ridge traverse of Striding Edge (Walk 6).



# The Eastern Fells

The Eastern Fells are covered in Volume One of the series by Wainwright. They include some of the finest, and hence busiest, mountains in England, and easy access from both sides of the range only adds to this popularity. The area is defined by Ullswater and Patterdale, with the A592 running along it to the east, and Thirlmere with the A591 to the west. The fells primarily form a long ridge running from Red Screes at the south-eastern tip of the range, over the Fairfield massif and down to Grisedale Tarn, then north over the Helvellyn range to The Dodds. There are, of course, lots of outliers within the group, scattered off this main ridge, as well as a few isolated fells.

There are 35 Wainwrights in the Eastern Fells. These are (in order of height):

Helvellyn 950m	Hartsop above How 581m
Nethermost Pike 891m	Great Mell Fell 537m
Catstycam 890m	High Hartsop Dodd 519m
Raise 883m	Low Pike 508m
Fairfield 873m	Little Mell Fell 505m
White Side 863m	Stone Arthur 504m
Dollywaggon Pike 858m	Gowbarrow Fell 481m
Great Dodd 857m	Nab Scar 450m
Stybarrow Dodd 843m	Glenridding Dodd 442m
St Sunday Crag 841m	Arnison Crag 433m
Hart Crag 822m	
Dove Crag 792m	
Watson's Dodd 789m	
Red Screes 776m	
Great Rigg 766m	
Hart Side 756m	
Seat Sandal 736m	
Clough Head 726m	
Birkhouse Moor 718m	
Sheffield Pike 675m	
High Pike 656m	
Middle Dodd 654m	
Little Hart Crag 637m	
Birks 622m	
Heron Pike 612m	

📷 Looking across to the Helvellyn range from Fairfield (Walk 9).





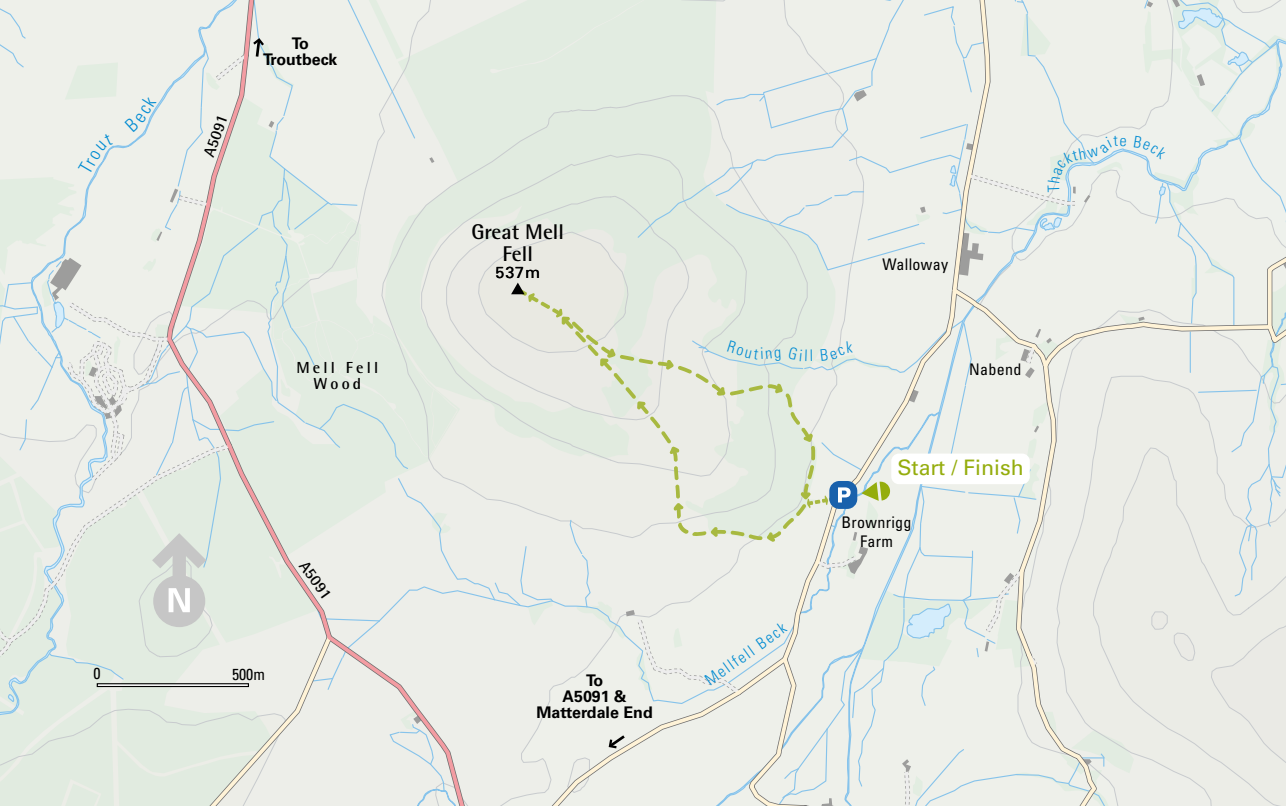
# 1 Great Mell Fell

<b>Location</b>	Eastern Fells	<b>Distance</b>	3.5km	<b>Height gain</b>	275m	<b>Time</b>	1 hour 30 minutes – 2 hours
<b>Fells included</b>	Great Mell Fell   537m   NY 396 253   Wainwright 156						
<b>Maps</b>	OS Explorer OL5, Harvey British Mountain Map – Lake District						
<b>Start / Finish</b>	Roadside parking by the rough track at NY 407 246						

Great Mell Fell is surprisingly prominent, given its small stature and isolation from other peaks. The walk to the summit is short, but very pleasant, and this is enhanced by wonderfully-architectural individual larch, scots pine, oak and holly trees that rise up almost to the summit. There's also a good chance that you'll share the summit with a handful of fell ponies.

Begin the walk by heading up the rough track where you've parked. Ignore the gateway to the right and continue for about 500m until a path can be seen rising uphill on the right. Follow this path up the broad south ridge of the fell, deviating here and there to enjoy the trees through which the path climbs.

The summit is soon gained, and gives magnificent views of Blencathra to the north-west, and the Far Eastern Fells to the south.



Return via the same route, or pick up an alternative path on the left as you descend back through the trees. This path goes steeply downhill to the east, into the small bowl holding Routing Gill Beck. At the bottom of the slope there's a fence. Turn right along the path here, and follow it back to the gate just short of the car park. Go through the gate and turn left to get back to your car.



## 4 Hart Side, Stybarrow Dodd, Watson's Dodd, Great Dodd, and Clough Head

4

The Eastern Fells

**Location** Eastern Fells **Distance** 18km **Height gain** 820m **Time** 6 – 7 hours

**Fells included** Hart Side | 756m | NY 359 197 | Wainwright 61  
 Stybarrow Dodd | 843m | NY 343 189 | Wainwright 21  
 Watson's Dodd | 789m | NY 335 195 | Wainwright 41  
 Great Dodd | 857m | NY 342 205 | Wainwright 19  
 Clough Head | 726m | NY 333 225 | Wainwright 75

**Maps** OS Explorer OL, Harvey British Mountain Map – Lake District

**Start / Finish** Car park at High Row, at NY 379 219

This is a long day out on high fells, but it is a superb traverse of The Dodds, and the walking itself is generally easy throughout, apart from a few boggy bits here and there.

From the car park area at High Row walk south on the lane to Dowthwaitehead. Go left between the buildings and down to the bridge over the Aira Beck. The public footpath starts off southwards, goes into a field and handrails the wall to your left. Follow it into the next field



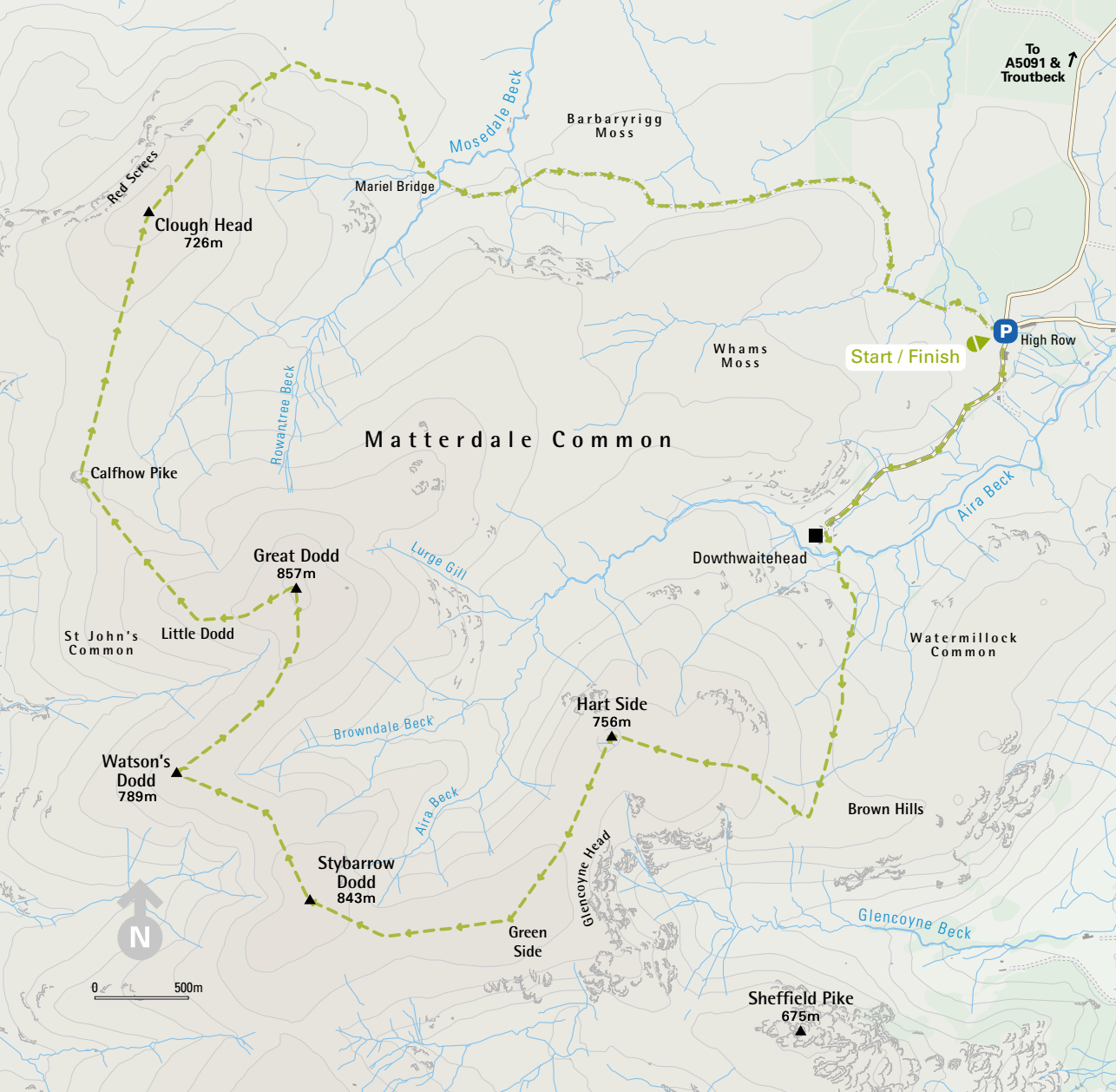
📷 The view from Place Fell up Glencoyne.

and climb diagonally up to the top corner until you reach the upper intake wall. This is the last drystone wall before you reach the open hillside. Below there will be sheep pastures, but above the intake wall it is rough, open fell. Follow the path southwards onto the ridge of Brown Hills. As the path goes through the wall, follow it then turn right uphill gaining the cairn on Birkett Fell. Here there is an easy-angled slope leading west to the summit of your first Wainwright of the day, Hart Side. Two cairns mark the top.

Head south-west on a path to a boggy col. The path actually takes a bypass around the next hill, and while this isn't a Wainwright, it's worth ignoring this diversion and keeping to the high ground to reach the summit of Green Side, marked on the OS Explorer map as White Stones. Now walk westwards into another col, then climb up grassy slopes to the north-west to gain the next Wainwright summit, Stybarrow Dodd. The summit is again marked by a cairn.

Descend north-westwards and follow the path very gently to the summit of Watson's Dodd, ignoring another path to the right that doesn't visit the summit. More easy ground leads to the path going north-east towards Great Dodd. Yet again, the main path on the ground avoids the summit. The path hugs the head of Mill Gill and contours to the ridge at Little Dodd, but you should ignore this and climb just east of north to the summit Great Dodd.

To the north-west lies the last Wainwright of the day, Clough Head, and it's a relatively easy but long walk out to its summit. However, if you've had enough there is an easy return to the car park directly down the north-east ridge of Great Dodd.



However, that would of course mean you'd have to come back another time to climb Clough Head, so you might as well do it while you're here! Descend Great Dodd's western side onto the ridge at Little Dodd. Here you'll find the path heading north-west down the ridge towards the rocky knoll of Calthow Pike. The path veers off just before Calthow Pike and avoids it by keeping to the right of it, but I always include it in my walk. Now it's just an easy, grassy walk northwards to Clough Head with a climb of 100m to reach the top. The views from Clough Head are dominated by the mass of Blencathra across the A66 to the north, and these really are spectacular.

From Clough Head walk north-east down the steep ridge to White Pike, then continue in the same direction to reach the Old Coach Road. This is an ancient byway across the fells, and while it is wet and boggy after rain, it's very straightforward to follow. Turn right along it as you approach from White Pike and follow it to where Mariel Bridge crosses Mosedale Beck. Continue on the Old Coach Road to Barbary Rigg and onwards to Groove Beck. It's then a short walk back, still on the Old Coach Road, to the car park at High Row.



Looking up Stanah Gill to Watson's Dodd and Stybarrow Dodd.





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 Cover – On Rannerdale Knotts with the bulk of Robinson behind (Walk 54).

 Back cover – The Buttermere Fells and Grasmere seen from Haycock (Walk 63).