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Holme, Beetham, Dallam

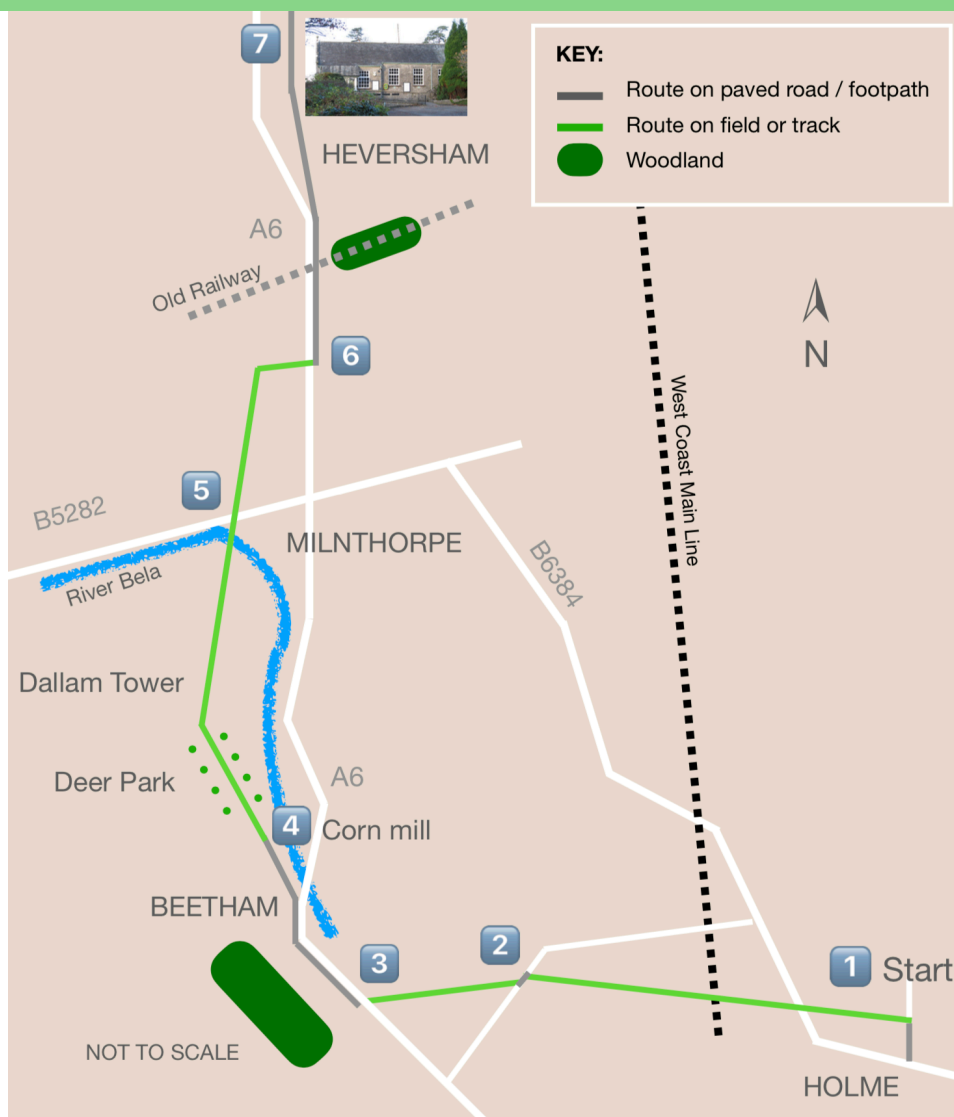
This is one of a series of short walks around the villages of Heversham and Leasgill, near Milnthorpe, Cumbria.

Disclaimer: Walkers are responsible for their own safety, particularly when on public roads, and are asked to observe the country code when crossing farmland.

Starting Point: The Athenaeum village hall on the main village street Leasgill LA7 7ET. The hall has a car park, but this is intended for users of the hall. There is free parking on the surrounding roads.

Terrain: 8 km / 5 miles. Bus journey, then mix of tarmac, pasture and rough track.

1 Catch the **555 bus** towards Lancaster from the stop across road from the Athenaeum. This goes every hour around the half hour, but check with the operator stagecoachbus.com Get off at the **Smithy Inn in Holme.**



Continue on foot in the same direction as the bus and, after 50 yards, take the first turning on the left into North Road. After about 200 yards, look for a footpath fingerpost on the left, beside a house with an extension with a distinctive curly top stone wall.

The path is mostly fenced and, once away from the village, continues in a straight line and is mostly well marked.

You are now on the Limestone Link, a path from Kirkby Lonsdale to Arnside.





When the path crosses the B6384, continue straight ahead to reach a footbridge across the West Coast Main Line railway.

2 The path reaches Pye's Bridge Lane

Turn left and follow the lane across the bridge over Holme Brook. Go just past Pye's Bridge Farm to find a fingerpost on the right where the road bends left. Continue straight ahead, up the rise, keeping to the *right-hand* side of the hedge. At the top of the rise follow the hedge round to the right, then, at the corner, head diagonally across the field to a squeeze stile. From the stile go straight ahead across the field to join a farm track.

Turn left and the track brings you out onto the A6 opposite Beetham Hall. 3



Cross the road and turn right along the footpath beside the A6 to reach Beetham village.

Beetham Hall started as a semi-fortified hall house in the 14th century, when raids by reivers (bandits) and Scots were still common. There are the remains of a pele tower from that time. It was later extended and passed to the Stanley family.

The Stanleys, Earls of Derby, were Royalists, and Beetham Hall is believed to have been captured by parliamentary forces under Fairfax in 1644 and parts were destroyed. Later that century a new house was built by Thomas Brabin, who used the old hall as a barn. The site is now owned by a funeral business.

Approaching Beetham, you pass the primary school, which incorporates the remains of the old toll house and the Heron Theatre. This tiny 80-seat theatre on the edge of Beetham was originally a grammar school, but converted to a theatre by a local amateur group in the 1960s. It offers a variety of professional and amateur shows.

Turn left into the second entrance into Beetham village, just before reaching the bridge over the River Bela. Follow signs down a lane to the Heron Corn Mill. 4



Heron Corn Mill. There has been a mill on this site since 1096. The present mill on the west side of the River Bela was built in 1750. There was another mill on the far bank, which later became a paper mill run by Henry Cooke Ltd, who bought the Heron Corn Mill and restored it, opening to the public in 1975.

It's generally open from Wednesday to Sunday; there are milling demonstrations and a shop where you can buy flour.

In the 21st century, the paper mill, which specialised in confectionery packaging, was bought by the Swedish company BillerudKorsnäs AB and now trades as Pelta Medical Papers.

From the car park by the Heron Corn Mill take the path signed Dallam and Milnthorpe, taking you straight ahead up a slope between an avenue of trees. Pass through the gate at the top of the rise and follow the way markers in a straight line through the park.

Dallam Deer Park extends to 190 acres and is home to a herd of fallow deer. There is an 18th century deer shelter, which you will see to your right.

Further on, to the left, is Dallam Tower itself. This is a largely 18th century house, not open to the public. It is the home of the Wilson family, whose members include Daniel and his son Edward Wilson, who were both MPs for Westmorland in the 18th century. Beyond Dallam Tower you will see the River Bela snaking into the Kent Estuary and the top of Morecambe Bay.



5 The path leaves the park across a stone bridge and through a gate onto Park Road.

The area to your right, upstream along the river, was the site of a number of watermills, most of which were driven out of business by the giant steam-powered mills of Lancashire in the 19th century. The sole survivor is Milnthorpe Mill, which from 1886 was run by John Dobson for making combs out of cow horn. Combs are still made here but out of plastic under the Duralon brand.

The River Bela runs west into the Kent Estuary and Morecambe Bay. Milnthorpe once boasted a port half a mile downstream at Sandside, where small ships brought in wine, guano (fertiliser) and coal. The port's trade was choked off by the building of Arnside railway viaduct across the estuary in 1857.

Go across Park Road and enter the lane opposite the bus stop. This takes you past Birkett's Farm and onto a narrow track leading gently uphill. Where the track turns sharp right, ignore this and continue straight ahead through the stile. Keep going straight to the top of the hill, where there is an excellent view over the Kent Estuary, Lyth Valley and surrounding hills.

Grisleymires Lane. The road leading into the industrial estate to your right is Grisleymires Lane. The lane originally led onto Milnthorpe marsh and the name comes for "griss", the Old Norse word for a pig and "myrr" a bog - in other words a pig wallow.

St Anthony's Tower This monument on the far edge of Milnthorpe was erected by the then owner of Milnthorpe Mill, Henry Smithies, to commemorate the passing of the Reform Act of 1832, which did away with the "rotten boroughs" and gave the vote to far more people (although not to women). Its siting within view of Dallam Tower estate is thought to have been a deliberate insult to the owners, the Wilson family, who were strongly opposed to the bill.



6 As you pass the last house, go through the stile and turn right, down the slope and onto Church Road (A6) through a gate. Turn left, then cross the road where it is safe to do so, to join the footpath along the A6. Continue towards Heversham and, after 800 yards, fork right onto the main village road, which will take you back to the Athenaeum. **7**

Just before the fork, the old railway bridge crosses the track of the former Furness Railway line, linking the West Coast Main Line at Hincaster with the line to Barrow at

Arnside. Heversham station was immediately to the west of the road bridge. The line was built to carry coke from the Durham coalfields to the iron and steel works of west Cumbria.

St Peter's church. Grade II* This has been a religious site since the 7th century; part of a cross from that time is in the church porch. The present church dates from the 11th century and has been expanded and remodelled many times, particularly in the 19th century, when the tower was rebuilt and the interior restored by Lancaster architects Paley & Austin. Hubert Austin lived in Heversham House, opposite the church.

St Mary's Well: set in the wall on the right of the road as you pass the churchyard. The name refers St Mary's Abbey in York, which came to own much of the village in the 11th century.

End of walk

This walk could be done in reverse, walking from the Athenaeum to Holme to enjoy a pint or a meal at the Smithy Inn before catching the 555 bus back. But check the times for both pub and bus!

Produced by Heversham Parish Council
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Photo of Dallam Tower:
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