

Walk 8: Sawrey to Hawkshead

A lovely walk over Claife Heights and back along the shores of Esthwaite Water.

Difficulty: Moderate

7.7 miles

980 ft altitude gain

3 hrs

On a sunny day, this walk would be perfect to take you and your family from one village to the next for a relaxing lunch before returning by a different route.

It circles over Claife Heights, past some idyllic tarns and into the forest before dropping down into Esthwaite Vale and the village of Hawkshead.

The return journey follows the road along Esthwaite Water back to Sawrey.

I followed this route on a late February afternoon with low sunshine glowing through the trees and the sound of geese calling overhead. It was heavenly.

There are numerous places to find refreshments in Hawkshead including [The Kings Arms](#) and [Minstrel's Gallery Tearoom](#). In Sawrey, the [Tower Bank Arms](#) and [The Cuckoo Brow Inn](#) can both be recommended.



Every effort has been made to achieve accuracy of information in this guide. The authors, publishers and website owners can take no responsibility for loss or injury (including fatal) to persons, loss or damage to property or equipment, trespass, irresponsible behaviour or any other mishap that may be suffered as a result of following the route descriptions or advice offered in this guide. The inclusion of a track or path as part of the route, or otherwise recommended, in this guide does not guarantee that the track or path will remain a right-of-way. If conflict with landowners arises, we advise that you act politely and leave by the shortest route available. If the matter needs to be taken further, then please take it up with the relevant authority.

The Walk

Parking: There is room for several cars on the road below St. Peter's churchyard.
All OS grid references [six digits] refer to map OL7

1. Leave through the main gate of [St. Peter's Church](#) [378952], Far Sawrey, and turn right into the lane. Ignore steep right-hand fork and continue past Spout House, up to the B5285.

Cross straight over the main road opposite house named 'The Glen', and go up the lane, signposted to Moss Eccles Tarn and Claife Heights. Soon passing the Vicarage on your right, the lane becomes a bridleway, along which continue across cattle-grid and briefly further to a footpath sign [375959].



Here leave main track and follow a foot path to the left, signed Moss Eccles Tarn ½ mile. Continue uphill through two field gates (a bridleway from Near Sawrey joins after the second gate), and continue more steeply up an obvious stony track (ignoring two field gates on the left) and through another field gate to reach Moss Eccles Tarn. Follow the bridleway past this tarn and then Wise Een Tarn, where the rocky track soon becomes grassier, leading uphill to a gate at the forest edge, after which follow the clear wide forestry trail.

Moss Eccles Tarn and Wise Een Tarn are 19th-century reservoirs. Their etymological origins are retained in moss (= morass) and wisc (= damp meadow). The tarns were created to supply water for domestic and commercial use and to provide fish for fishing. Beatrix Potter had her own boat on Moss Eccles Tarn.

Meditation 1: Beside the tarns

Reflect on the life that is happening out of sight, below the surface of the water. This reminds us that God is always at work even when His work is not necessarily visible to us. And then suddenly, as with Jacob, the light dawns! *'Surely the Lord is in this place and I did not know it! How awesome is this place. This is none other than the house of God and this is the gate of heaven'* (Gen. 28:16-17).



2. After $\frac{1}{4}$ mile [374982] leave the main track and follow the footpath going diagonally left downhill to blue bridleway sign. At the crossing of ways, turn left and take the wide forest track straight ahead, bending left downhill and then rising diagonally right to some guide posts [375987]. At the guide posts, leave the main track and turn left – still slightly uphill – on the bridleway signposted to Hawkshead.

Meditation 2: Just to the west of the Guide Posts

The tree stumps remind us that the trees were planted for a purpose and they were felled when they were ready to fulfil that purpose. *'The Lord will fulfil His purpose for me'* (Psalm 138:8). Are we fulfilling God's purpose for our lives? God's servants do not physically live for ever but God's work continues throughout succeeding generations just as new trees are planted in the apparent desolation of clearance. Reflect on the ministry God has given you and pray for the ministry of those who will come after you.

At a wall on your right, ignore narrow a footpath to Latterbarrow and continue down a clear, broad (in places stony) bridleway eventually through four field gates to Colthouse Lane.

3. Turn Left for about 50 yards, and then turn right briefly along a side-road before turning left at a signpost [359986] pointing to the right of green garage doors. Go through the field gate and follow waymarks round to the right, through a wall gap and then diagonally left (following way-posts) to a wall stile.

Meditation 3: At the wall stile

Amid the grandeur of the mountains, forests and tarns we may feel incredibly insignificant. Let's reflect on Hagar's words in Genesis 16:13: *'You are the God who sees me.'* Regardless of where we are on the spectrum of human experience, God sees us and is intimately familiar with our circumstances. May that bring comfort, strength and inspiration.

Go over the stile and then down a steep decline, through two kissing gates, crossing Scar House Lane. Continue on an obvious footpath and at the next signpost, turn left along a clear newly-made footpath signed towards Hawkshead. Follow the signs and eventually cross Black Beck footbridge and continue up to the main road (B5285).

4. Carefully cross the B5285 and go straight ahead through a narrow gate and continue to the left of Smithy Cottage, eventually passing through the archway at the back of the Red Lion Pub, to emerge on Main Street in Hawkshead. Turn left past the National Trust second-hand bookshop and the [Queen's Head](#), from where the [Poppi Red Café](#) is visible. To the right of the café ascend steps to enter the northeast of the churchyard of [St. Michael and All Angels, Hawkshead](#).

5. Leave the churchyard on the southeast side; at bottom of steps turn left past the Old Grammar School, and right along Main Street. Just before junction with the main road, turn left through a gate and walk along Heelis Place and the edge of the car park, before turning right to join the main road again.



Turn left along B5285 and go over a bridge crossing Black Beck. Beyond the bridge continue with caution on B5285 for 1/3 mile, where a footpath on the right then runs parallel with the road. From this point, with Esthwaite Water on the right, sections of footpath alternate with further sections of road walking until you enter Near Sawrey.



Esthwaite Water, largely surrounded by privately owned land, is a naturally-formed lake containing pike, roach, trout and char; unsurprisingly, Esthwaite Water has also become home to elusive otters and visiting ospreys. When William Wordsworth was attending school in Hawkshead (1779-87) he skated on Esthwaite Water in the winter months.

During 'osprey season', when passing the boat house [363965] at the south end of the mini-reserve section on B5285, look straight across Esthwaite Water to see camera and osprey nest on Strickland Ees.

6. Re-joining the B5285 after the children's play area, continue through Near Sawrey past the [Tower Bank Arms](#) and the entrance to [Hill Top Farm \(NT\)](#). Just past the entrance take a footpath on the right which runs initially alongside the road before diverging slightly right to follow Wilfin Beck. Where the footpath crosses the beck, follow the clear footpath back to St. Peter's Church, Far Sawrey.

Total distance: approx. 7.7 miles (includes visiting churchyards)