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Lacy's Caves Long Meg and her Daughters

a walk with a water mill, the river, a hermit's cave, a lost village, a church and a druids' circle



'Discover Eden' is a countryside recreation and interpretation programme being managed by East Cumbria Countryside Project in partnership with the Eden Rivers Trust supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Fourteen circuitual routes at dispersed locations throughout East Cumbria provide an opportunity to explore the great scenic diversity associated with the Eden catchment landscape.

Each route is well way marked with arrows and the distinctive 'Discover Eden' Kingfisher logo. Watch out for a series of small bronze panels etched with motifs depicting aspects of human and natural heritage. Rubbings can be taken from these using paper and crayon.

By walking all the routes you can eventually collect rubbings of nearly one hundred images.



bronze motifs by Pip Hall

Brief route details:

Parking: limited, considerate parking at Little Salkeld
Length: 7km 4 1/2 miles 2 - 3 hours
Grade: moderate with some stiles and hills
care needed near steep cliffs around Lacy's Caves
Route: Little Salkeld - Lacy's Caves - St. Michael's church
- Long Meg stone circle - Little Salkeld
Clothing: boots and outdoor clothing; paths can be wet



Lacy's Caves



Lacy's Caves Long Meg and her Daughters

Little Salkeld is notable for its working watermill, which after many years of decline began a new lease of life in 1975. Now widely acclaimed for its production of organic flour, it also has a tearoom open daily between 10.30am and 5pm serving vegetarian snacks and cakes and scones. Mill tours are available daily except Wednesdays and Saturdays.

Begin your walk at the opposite end of the village from the Water Mill along a side road to the left by the green, where there is some limited car parking space available. After walking past the former vicarage and a few other houses, take a right fork by Town End Farm along a private road parallel with the Settle - Carlisle Railway. **THERE IS NO ACCESS FOR UNAUTHORISED VEHICLES** along this road but it is a public footpath.

As you walk along, the river Eden comes sweeping into view on its perpetual journey north. The holes in the riverbank are sand martin nests and the village opposite is Great Salkeld. Salkeld means 'spring among the willows'.

'Before the flour, the mill - before the mill, the grain - before the grain, the sun, - the earth, the rain'. - Anon

Little Salkeld watermill



section from ceramic map

The Settle - Carlisle railway, regarded by many as the most spectacularly scenic main line in England, was opened in 1876 and took seven years to construct.

Note the disused signal box on the other side of the railway line. This once controlled a branch line to the Long Meg Gypsum mine, which was abandoned in 1975. Gypsum deposits were formed along the Eden valley when shallow lakes evaporated, 200 million years ago, in what was then a tropical climate.

The appropriately named potter Michael Eden and children from High Hesket, Armathwaite, Langwathby and Culgaith schools created the ceramic map of the river,



lady's slipper

Continue past the two derelict buildings on your right and bear sharp left down the sloping track with the entrance to the old gypsum works on your right. There is no public right of way through this property.

Surface mining for gypsum used in the production of plaster began in 1870 and the Long Meg Plaster Company started underground mining in 1885. Mining continued until 1915 when the mine closed but it was reopened again in 1922 to supply anhydrite for the manufacture of sulphuric acid and ammonium compounds for fertilizers. British Plaster Board Ltd. purchased the company in 1939 and later became British Gypsum, which eventually stopped mining here to concentrate its operation at Kirkby Thore.

Turn left by the electricity substation.

Railway sidings located in the area to the right, as you follow the path around, connected with the main railway for transportation of the gypsum. It is gradually being colonised by willow, birch and alder scrub, which are the natural pioneers of native woodland.



cascades on the Eden

The railway viaduct over the river is 137 yards long and 60 feet high and took four years to build. With hundreds of navvies living in large camps in the area at the time, combined with the mine workings, the scene must have been very different to the peaceful one we enjoy today.

As you leave the sidings area and enter the mature woodland please keep dogs under close control to avoid disturbing wildlife.

Watch out for red squirrels, stoats and roe deer. Birds you might see include jays, which draw attention to themselves with their raucous call, great spotted woodpeckers, tree creepers and, in the vicinity of the river, dippers and grey wagtails.

Follow the path along the line of an old tramway.

To the left the ground falls away sharply to the river and to the right you will see the derelict remains of the mine shored up with timber. The remnants of the tramway track can be seen here which was used for bringing gypsum down in trucks. The mine machinery was powered by steam and by a turbine in the river where the water runs very rapidly over a weir,

Over many centuries, when the river was narrower, there was a succession of bridges built here. The first was one of the few medieval packhorse bridges south of Carlisle but it and numerous replacements were washed away in floods.



red squirrel

The track you are following now was used in the last century by miners walking every day between Kirkoswald and Lazonby and the mines. Many of the beech and oak trees were planted 200 years ago.

Continue along the path to a sandstone cliff jutting up from the river on your left where the public right of way ascends a steep slope straight ahead over the top of the rocky outcrop.

Excavated caves in the rock underneath, known as Lacy's Caves were named after a Lieutenant Colonel Samuel Lacy who owned the Salkeld Hall estate in the 18th century.

PLEASE TAKE GREAT CARE IN THE VICINITY OF THESE CAVES. CHILDREN SHOULD BE VERY CLOSELY SUPERVISED.

The area in and around the caves is narrow and precipitous in places and inside the caves there are openings overlooking the river through which there is a sudden and sheer drop down to the fast flowing water below.

The caves were hollowed out at a time when it was fashionable to create romantic ruins and grottoes on country estates. It is said Samuel Lacy even employed a man to live in the caves to enhance the impression of antiquity by pretending to be a hermit. Hard quartz veins criss crossing the exposed layers of softer sandstone, stand out, showing that there has been considerable erosion since the caves were first excavated.



Lacy's Caves

Over the top of the caves, the path descends again past another red sandstone cliff on your right.

The shape of the rock here is reminiscent of the wind blown sand dunes from which it derived 260 million years ago when Cumbria lay in a region of hot deserts.

You proceed through an area where a plantation of mainly Norway spruce, cypress and yew trees has recently been felled. Continue along a timber walkway, constructed to avoid a section of very wet ground, over two step stiles and out of the woods into a field.

Carry on along the riverbank for some way, cross another stile and follow the path where it rises a little higher up into the field and then down again to the river bank.

This is known as Kirkbank which overlooks the site of an ancient village called Addingham believed to have been washed away during the twelfth century when the river changed its course. Some of the stone from Addingham's church may have been used in the construction of St. Michael's Church near Glassonby where you will also find several old stone artefacts retrieved from the river during a drought in 1913.

looking towards Great Salkeld





green road

Carry on to the step stile over the fence and down to the road at Daleraven Bridge.

This is where the Glassonby Beck, which forms the boundary between Kirkoswald and Glassonby parishes, flows into the Eden. There is a boundary stone by the bridge.

Turn right up the road and keep to the right in single file as vehicles come fast down the hill around the bends.

A 'road liable to subsidence' sign is a reference to the fact that the underground tunnels from Long Meg Gypsum mines reach this far. Over 5 million tons of gypsum were extracted from 1.3 million square yards of land.

Just past the 'subsidence' sign, as you get to the top of this steep bend in the road, turn right onto a track which then bears left between two field entrances along a narrow hedged track signposted public path.

Truly 'off the beaten track' this secluded green road has escaped farmacing and survives as a sheltered, tree lined corridor through the agricultural landscape. The landowners' use it to move livestock safely from one field to another, pheasant rearing for shooting, forestry management and, in the process, provide a variety of habitats for wildlife including an ever expanding population of rabbits. As you proceed there are wonderful views across to the Lake District.

NORTH LAKE DISTRICT MOUNTAINS

Blencathra
868 metres

Skiddaw
931 metres

Corrock Fell
663 metres



Keep straight on where the track starts to widen and two other tracks come in from either side and then continue on to a second junction where you have a choice of two routes to Long Meg and her Daughters.

A shorter direct route continues on page 18.

Route via St. Michael's Church

Our recommended route follows the wider track to the left which takes you via St. Michael's church from where a public bridleway provides a pleasant route across farmland to the stone circle.



10th century stone cross

The nave of St. Michael's Church was built during the 13th century and the chancel in 1512. Major alterations were carried out in 1898 when the chancel roof was rebuilt, new ceilings were installed and the vestry roof was raised to accommodate the organ. The stone artefacts retrieved from the river are kept in the porch and include a fine Viking 'hogsback' tombstone, two pieces of the shaft of a cross and some early coffin lids.

Outside the church opposite the porch is a 10th century, wheel headed Anglian stone cross, carved with scrolls, probably originating from the Addingham churchyard.

The route from here to Long Meg and her Daughters goes through the churchyard and the field beyond, across a farm track into another field and then follows the wall on your right. Bear right through a brideway gate and along the right hand boundary of a conifer plantation.

At this point the stone circle can be seen clearly in the distance ahead.

At the end of the plantation go through another brideway gate and again keep to the wall on your right, until you get to a third brideway gate which takes you onto a short section of track. Cross the track and go through a field gate into another field. Follow the hedge on your left until you pass through a gate in the far corner and you arrive at the stone circle.



St. Michael's Church, Glassonby

Direct route to Long Meg

The track bearing right and getting narrower again provides a more direct route to the stone circle past the Longmeg farmstead.

At the end of this track you will see a massive badger sett, where the large soil heaps indicate that it has been home to generations of badgers for hundreds of years. If you look carefully at the wire on the fence you may find tufts of hair left behind as they go back and forth on nightly forays for food. Although versatile in their eating habits a badger's diet consists mainly of earthworms.

Carry on through the wooden gate and proceed along the track past the farm buildings on your right.



badgers

Standing stones and circles in the Eden Catchment

Long Meg and her Daughters is the third largest stone circle in Britain. There are 1000 or more in the British Isles as a whole and 65 of these are in Cumbria.

There are several different types of circle and numerous standing stones relating to circles. Some were erected as free standing, some were covered with mounds of soil or contained within earth banks called henges and some a combination of all of these.



Moor Divock complex

Long Meg and her Daughters has the remains of an embankment on its western perimeter, which may be an indication that it was part of the henge building tradition but two more obvious examples in the Eden catchment region are Mayburgh Henge and King Arthur's Round Table just south of Penrith. Other circles in the region include The Cockpit and Moor Divock west of Askham, Gunnerkeld north east of Shap and Oddendale, near Crosby Ravensworth.



Mayburgh Henge near Penrith



Long Meg and her Daughters

Long Meg and her Daughters

*"Speak thou, whose massy strength and stature scorn
the power of years - pre- eminent, and placed
apart, to overlook the circle vast.
Speak giant mother! Tell it to the morn,
while she dispels the cumbrous shades of night ..."*

William Wordsworth



The Long Meg and her Daughters stone circle has been here since the Neolithic and Bronze Ages.

Long Meg, on the far side of the circle and standing on her own, is a 3.4 metres tall piece of red sandstone. The stone circle, which is actually more of an oval shape, consists of 65 (more or less) granite boulders enclosing an area 109 metres in length by 92 metres wide.



Long Meg

Long Meg is apparently aligned, from the centre of the circle, with the mid-winter sunset and is decorated with carved cup and ring symbols and spirals, which are possibly 4,500 years old. It is generally

believed that stone circles were constructed for religious purposes and arranged in conjunction with the cycles of the sun and moon. Midwinter would have been a time of great stress and deprivation in Neolithic times and it is easy to imagine ceremonies and rituals being performed that anticipated the return of summer.



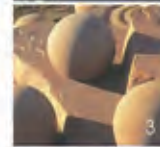
Local folklore has given rise to the story that Long Meg and her Daughters were witches who, long ago, were turned into stone as a punishment for dancing here on the Sabbath but that if you count the same number of stones twice they will come back to life.

Colonel Lacy, the man who went to such trouble to create an illusionary sense of antiquity with his caves, was also behind a fortunately ill fated attempt to destroy the genuine ancient stone circle with explosives in 1725. When the men he sent to do the work arrived they were suddenly caught in a violent storm, which because they thought it was a sign that pagan gods were angry at the prospect of their temple being desecrated, they ran off in fright and refused to return.

When you are ready to leave Long Meg and her Daughters go through the gate by the cattle grid, follow the road for a short distance and then a track off to the right.

There are superb views from here of Cross Fell and the Pennines with the conical 'pikes' of Knock, Dufton and Murton over to the left, the Howgills in the distance straight ahead and the Lake District to the right.

When you get to the road turn right back to Little Salkeld.



River Eden catchment area

Scottish Border



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1. River Eamont 2. Mayburgh Henge 3. 'Red River' Benchmark near Temple Sowerby
4. Mosedale near Coldbeck 5. Haaf netting in Solway 6. Ravenstonedale
7. Appleby horse fair 8. River Eden near Wetheral 9. Pendragon Castle

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