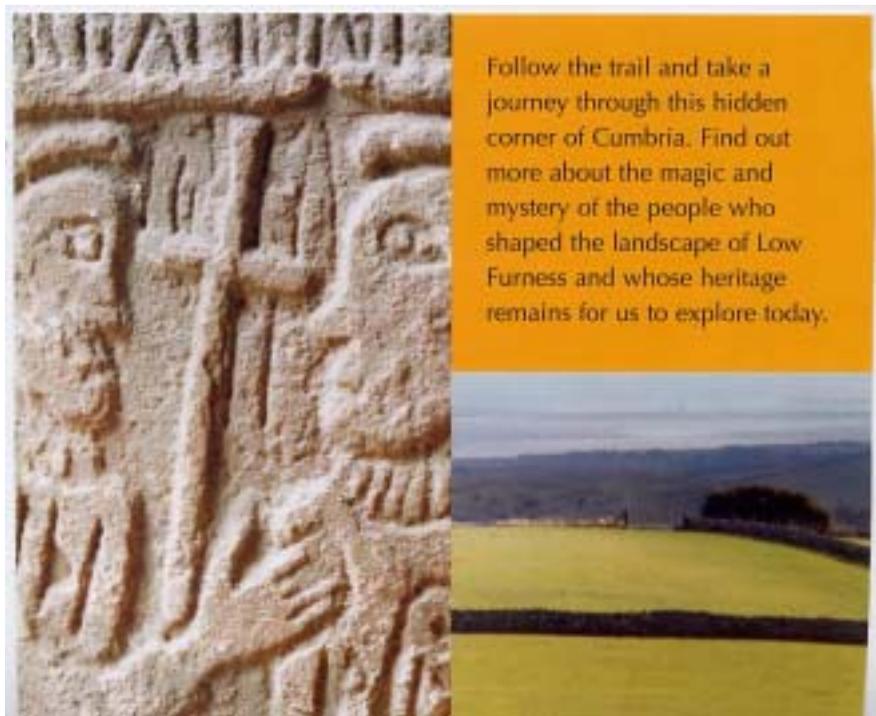


# Hidden Light- Low Furness Walks.



Walking 'The Vale of Nightshade



*Explore Low Furness*

# ‘Vale of Nightshade’ Walk



This varied walk is suitable for the whole family with much to interest all ages along the way.

Allow time to visit and explore the magnificent ruins of Furness Abbey and its surrounds. The 'Curator's Cottage' nearby often hosts themed events which bring history to life through an exciting 'hands on' programme.

Originally devised by Neil Coates and published by Sigma in 1999, this delightful walk had to be re-routed from Newton back to Dalton in Furness due to recent housing developments and redirected and now obscured pathways; this does nothing to spoil what is an excellent shortish walk.

**Route: Dalton– Furness Abbey– Bow Bridge– Newton–  
return to Dalton.**

**Distance: About 5 miles (maximum)**

**Terrain:**

Easy walking in the main through undulating countryside; some wet patches in particularly wet weather. No problem in strong shoes or wellies.

**Start: The Brown Cow Inn, Dalton –in–Furness**

**Map: OS Outdoor Leisure Sheet 6: The English Lakes (SW)  
Scale 1: 25000**

**Access: Dalton is now bypassed off the A590 about 4 miles NE of Barrow in Furness. The Brown Cow stands at Goose Green at the foot of the hill immediately below St. Mary's Church and Dalton castle. Parking at the pub or in the square beside the castle and walk down Church Street.**



## The Walk:

Stride directly away from the pub's front door to the small car park about 100 yards distant. Turn right here with the footpath sign for Millwood and skirt round the car park, soon bearing left, again at a sign for Millwood. A wide gravel path skirts the woodland edge, narrowing and becoming muddier as it leaves the company of the road above and traces a route beside and below the railway line to Barrow.

Passing below a signal box, the first of several gates is encountered before the path passes beneath the railway.

A further passage beneath another line follows in about 300 yards, the path then merging into a rough old lane which GRADUALLY RISES TO A MAIN ROAD.

**The way now is directly opposite but you're at a dangerous corner, so bear right for a short distance before crossing the road and walking back to the path, signposted as a footpath to Furness Abbey.**

The initially wide path soon deteriorates into a narrow way between the railway embankment and a long pasture. The narrow, wooded valley here is known as the 'Vale of Nightshade' and here and there, in season, the thickly vegetated path is indeed hung with growths of woody nightshade (bittersweet), its purplish flowers of summer succeeded by red berries in autumn. This isn't a path for those wearing shorts as the nettles and brambles can be a bit difficult in summer.

Persevere, however, for the route passes beneath the railway to emerge onto a narrow lane; within 100 yards or so you reach the Abbey Inn and the old archway over the road.

**This is the northern limit of the remarkable ruins of Furness Abbey, originally founded in AD1127 as a daughter house to the great French Abbey at Savigny**



Set in the narrow, wooded valley of Beckansgill, the foundation grew to become the second wealthiest of all the Cistercian Houses in Britain. The valley site offered the seclusion sought by the monks and the advantage of being shielded from the gaze of Danish raiders and pirates who still haunted the nearby Irish Sea in the 12th. and 13th. Centuries.

With their business acumen, royal patronage (King Stephen gave the land on which the abbey was built) and religious fervour the monks established agricultural, mining and iron smelting businesses which allowed them to expand their initial small-scale religious house into a massive complex, the remains of which are clearly visible today.

It would be quite easy to spend several hours here to fully appreciate the site which, not being on the 'mainstream' tourism routes enjoyed by the more famous abbeys such as Fountains or Tintern, is consequently remarkably under-visited and relatively unknown.

Were this site in the centre of Lakeland it would be overrun— enjoy its tranquillity!

There is an admission charge.

The site is open daily from April to October.

To continue.....

The lane skirts the boundary fence of the Abbey complex, affording good views of the main buildings including the west tower and the infirmary chapel, the solid detached building passed by close to just after you ignore the turning to the Town Centre, remaining instead with the boundary fence. On your right just as the road begins to climb is the old Abbey Mill (now entitled 'The Custodian's Cottage'), restored to other uses by various voluntary employment projects.

Immediately past this building take the path on the right which becomes a path leading to a crossing on the level over the railway. Once across turn right and walk down the long pasture, tracing the line of the stream (the mill leat) which runs along the right hand side of the field. Cross the slab bridge and continue downstream to the medieval Bow Bridge, an old pack horse bridge in a sylvan setting. Cross this, walk to the lane and turn left.

At the road junction look on your right to find a footpath sign-posted for Newton. Beyond the 'kissing gate' walk straight uphill to the lower way marker post at the top of the field. Take a breather here as an excuse to take in the expansive views. Close to hand are the terraces of Barrow with the shipyards beyond and the curving bank of Walney Island. The busy shipping lane beyond takes the eye out to the several gas rig platforms tapping the resources of the Irish Sea basin.

To the north the high mountains of the Coniston area rise steeply and darkly beyond the undulating limestone crags and commons of the Furness Peninsula.

Head across the fields to the village of Newton, leaving the field opposite the Village Inn. Turn right down the lane directly in front of the pub, which soon bends left to wind through the small village passing by the childrens' playground by the village hall and the pottery workshop, to reach another pub, the Farmers Arms.



Time for a break?

Almost immediately after leaving the Farmers Arms take the signposted high-banked track (Long Lane) and slowly ascend the path; continue ahead with views of Black Combe just to the left of your line of vision. The lower section of this lane can be a bit muddy in bad weather.



Where the Lane does a 'dog-leg right' continue ahead instead through a gap stile, cross the field to reach a further stile opposite, over this stile and then crossing two more fields and stiles to emerge with great care onto a road in front of some houses (quarry traffic regularly uses this road, so beware!)

Cross the road to follow a path between houses, continue ahead along another path at the next road (signposted Skelwith drive), keep left at the next path junction and then right at the next; you can just see open country on your right for a little while longer. Go through a gate, pass a childrens' play area, emerging onto Buttermere Drive. Turn left here and then right at the next junction i=onto Coronation Drive.

At the next junction turn left downhill towards Dalton nestling in the hollow below.

Continue downhill, passing the Railway Station on your left. After the Railway Inn there is a path on the left signed 'Little Fields' running beside a stream.

This 'Little Fields' path will return you to Dalton Castle and the start of the walk in about a half mile.

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The castle is now no more than a four –square tower set at one end of the pleasant square of old cottages and pubs. Its history is uncertain, it may well be a pele tower built as a defence against Scottish raiders in the 1300s. In the ownership of the National Trust it is only open on Saturday afternoons in summer.

The parish church of St. Mar's is thought to stand on the site of the original hamlet, recorded in the Domesday Book as Daltune.

The church has been rebuilt to a design by Paley and Austin. The font is from Furness Abbey.

In the churchyard can be seen a memorial to the 320 victims of the plague which ravaged the town in 1662– at the time the total population was only 612!

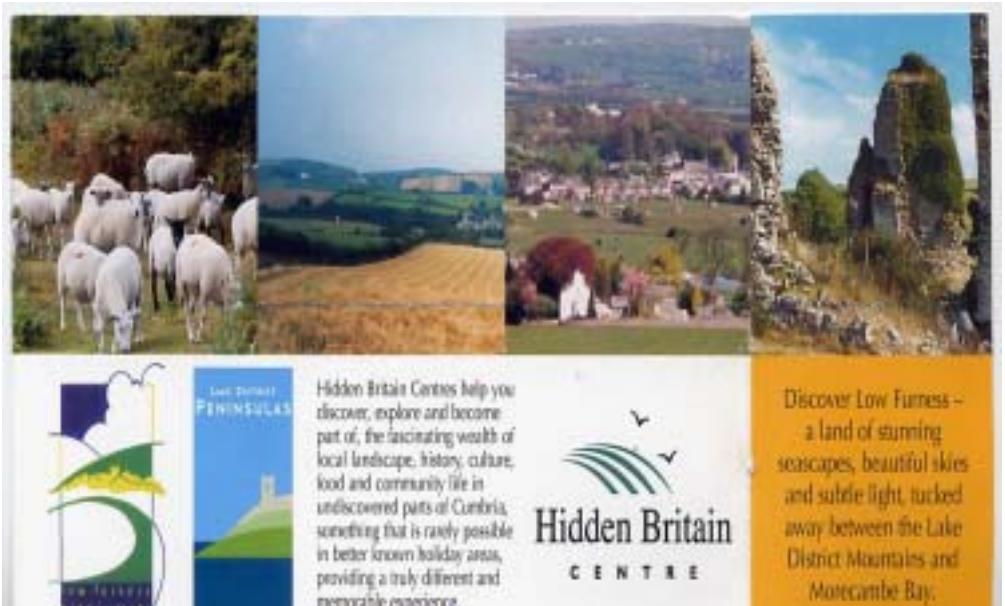
There is also is a memorial to George Romney, that most fashionable of portrait painters in the mid-18th century.

This walk is published by the Hidden Light-Low Furness Association and is one of a series of walks of various distances which explore the unique heritage of Low Furness..

This is an evolving community project which is throwing 'new light' on this part of South Cumbria and providing a wealth of information and 'hands on' experiences for those wishing to explore off the 'usual' tourist routes.'

Other walks and a wealth of information about the area, its history, its spiritual sites, its archaeology, and much more, can be found on our website:

[www.explorelowfurness.co.uk](http://www.explorelowfurness.co.uk)



Hidden Britain Centres help you discover, explore and become part of, the fascinating wealth of local landscape, history, culture, food and community life in undiscovered parts of Cumbria, something that is rarely possible in better known holiday areas, providing a truly different and memorable experience.

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CENTRE

Discover Low Furness – a land of stunning seascapes, beautiful skies and subtle light, tucked away between the Lake District Mountains and Morecambe Bay.

