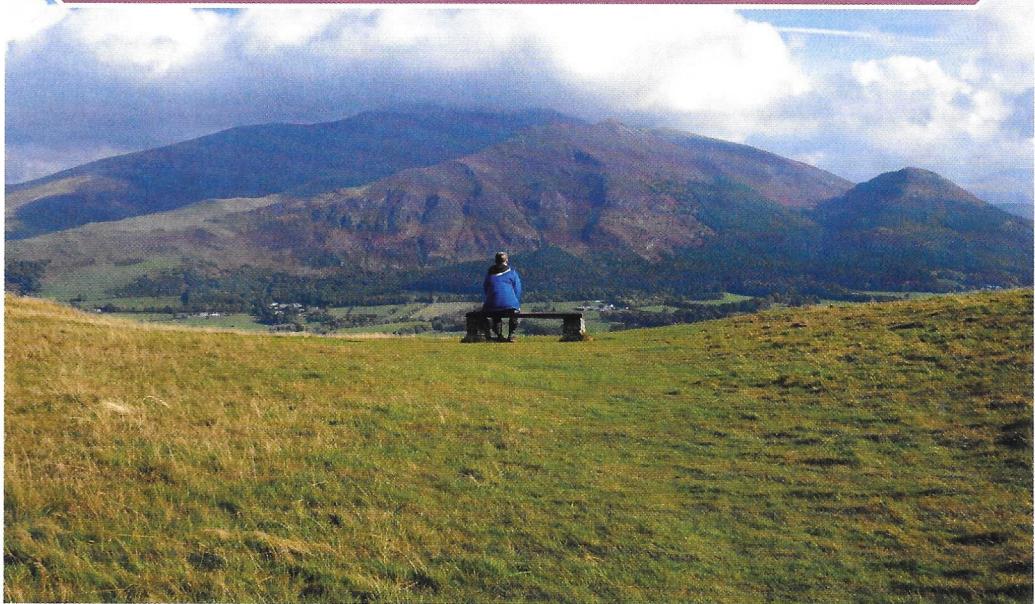


Why? To experience the stunning views from the smaller Wainwrights in glorious Cumbria



Rest on the bench on Sale Fell and admire the spectacular view of Bassenthwaite Lake and Skiddaw

GET AWAY...

For the Weekend!

WHETHER YOU'RE A WAINWRIGHT BAGGER OR NOT, THE APPEAL OF CAPTIVATING CUMBRIA IS UTTERLY COMPELLING

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY: Carol Kubicki

I don't think he will mind if I expose my partner, Anthony, as a collector of Wainwrights, aka a Wainwright Bagger.

If you are none the wiser, these Wainwrights are 214 Lake District fells listed by Alfred Wainwright in his guidebooks. The fells range from Scafell Pike (3,210ft) to Castle Crag (985ft).

Fortunately, we both enjoy visiting the Lake District and, although I would happily climb the same hill every time, Anthony argues that his Wainwright challenge (or obsession) encourages us to visit hills beyond the attractions of the central fells. Over the years he has managed to tick off 118 Wainwrights and an autumn break stretching our legs in the quieter northwestern Lakes would give him the chance to bag a couple more.

The Lake District is an easy drive from

where we live in Greater Manchester and we didn't pull the 'van over until we had passed Keswick. We had lunch at the viewpoint on the Whinlatter Pass road with a panorama over Bassenthwaite Lake – the answer to that popular quiz question: what is the name of the Lake District's only lake?

The smaller Wainwrights might seem to be uninspiring options, but Wainwright picked them for a reason: many are stunning viewpoints and are perfect for half-day outings.

Sale Fell, between Keswick and Cockermouth, proved to be one such hill.

We parked in a layby near Wythop Mill's lovely church, St Margaret, which has an unusual north-facing door due to its position tucked into the fellside and overlooking the Wythop Valley.

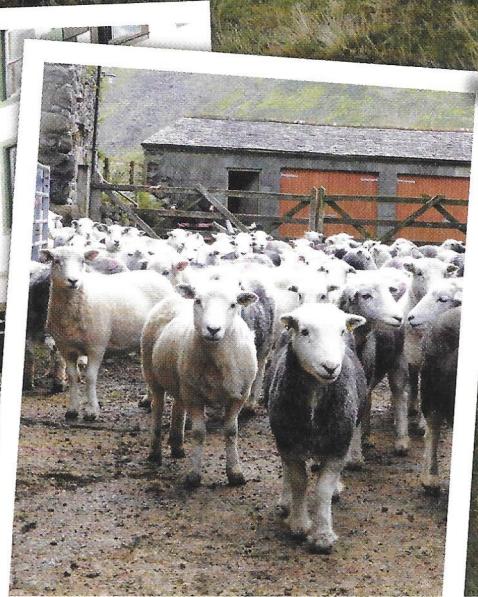
From the church, a gently rising path ▶



MAIN Looking over Rannerdale Knotts to Crummock Water

BELOW LEFT The picturesque marketplace in Cockermouth

BELOW RIGHT Herdwick sheep are native to the Lake District



TOP TIPS

For the history of Stanger Spa
 derwentfells.com/pdfs/journal/Journal52.pdf

The Keswick to Buttermere bus (Honister Rambler) goes through Lorton. For timetables
 cumbria.gov.uk

For a list of the 214 Lake District fells called Wainwrights
 walkhighlands.co.uk/wainwrights

climbs through the bracken, opening up the views to Cockermouth and the Irish Sea.

Wainwright described Sale Fell as being on the "extreme cornerstone of the northwest fells" and this commanding position gives splendid views of the imposing flanks of Skiddaw and its foothills.

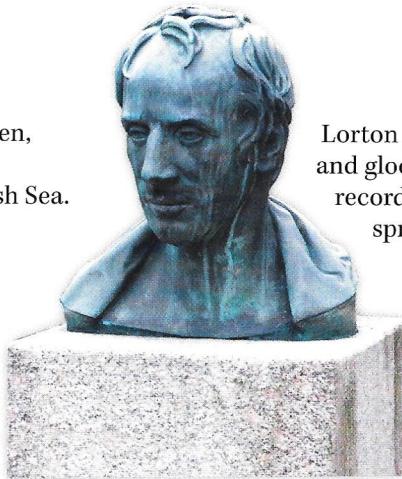
We stood on all the bumps on Sale Fell's lumpy summit, not sure which was the highest point and then followed the criss-cross network of paths to the ridge above Wythop Woods.

From here we had a lofty view along the length of Bassenthwaite Lake, glistening deep blue in the autumn sunshine.

We were pitched at the small campsite of the Wheatsheaf Inn in Low Lorton and took an evening stroll around the church and past rows of traditional cottages to find the Lorton Yew.

Immortalised in a poem by William Wordsworth, this yew still grows beside Whit Beck in High Lorton.

Wordsworth visited with Samuel Taylor Coleridge in 1799 and called it the "pride of



Robert Douglas / Alamy Stock Photo

Lorton Vale" with "vast circumference and gloom profound". Coleridge recorded in his journal that it had a spread of "17 strides".

Thought to be about 1,000 years old, the still-impressive tree was damaged by storms in the mid-nineteenth century and again in 1999 and is now half the tree Wordsworth and Coleridge visited. I tried to imagine

what Lorton would have looked like in the eleventh century when this fine tree was just a sapling, but my thoughts refused to bridge the expanse of years.

Across the beck from the Lorton Yew is what is now the village hall, but was the malthouse for the Jennings Brewery.

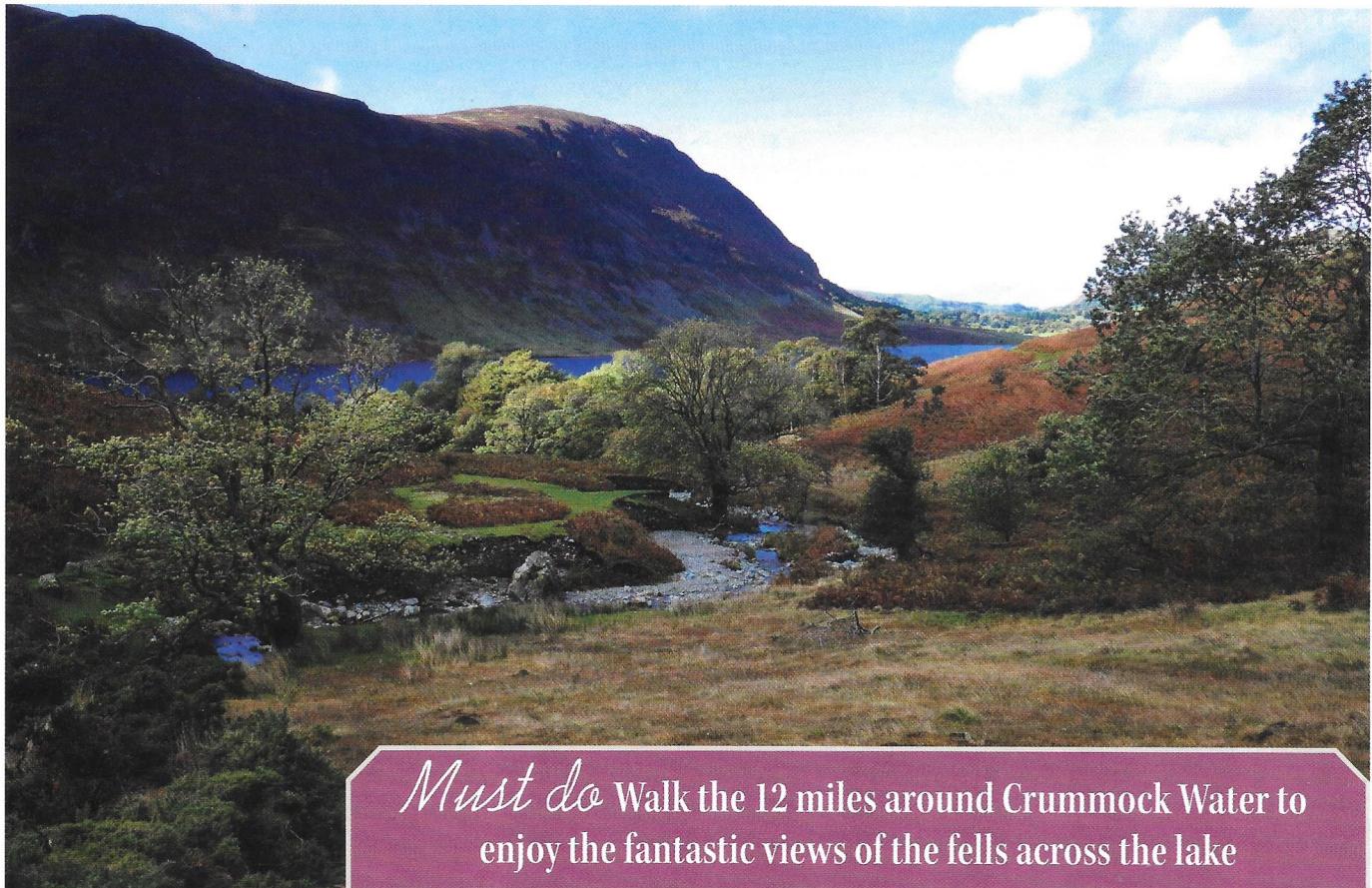
John Jennings started his brewing business in Lorton and was based here for over 40 years before moving to Cockermouth in 1874.

Next morning, we opted for a low-level walk, following the River Cocker along Lorton Vale to Cockermouth, my favourite Cumbrian town.

This is an easy walk through fields, with the chance to look back at the views of the

ABOVE The bust of William Wordsworth 1770 – 1850, Cockermouth

BETWEEN Looking back to Crummock Water from Rannerdale



Must do Walk the 12 miles around Crummock Water to enjoy the fantastic views of the fells across the lake

Buttermere fells at every stile.

About 1½ miles from our campsite is Stanger Spa, set in a copse on the edge of a wetland and an unlikely spot for a spa.

In the early nineteenth century, local people would take a Sunday promenade to buy the water for sixpence (2.5p) a gallon to use as a purgative and for skin ailments. Although I was keen to taste this reputedly very salty water, I had to forgo the purge as the grille-covered well was full of fallen leaves and uninviting.

After Stanger, the path closely follows the river and we arrived in Cockermouth on a pretty path opposite the youth hostel. We found the Georgian house that was William Wordsworth's childhood home in the 1770s; it's now owned by the National Trust and open to visitors.

Cockermouth has plenty of handsome buildings, its main street a wide, tree-lined road with interesting shops and alleys just asking to be explored.

In Old Kings Arms Lane, I found the Cockermouth History Wall which tells the story of the town and some of its renowned residents and businesses.

Our tour of the Jennings Brewery started in the cosy bar, where the high water line on the wall from the floods of 2009 and 2015

was pointed out by our guide. The floods contaminated the well, from which the brewery's water comes, making it unusable for six months.

I have never tried making home-brew, but left with a good grasp of how flavours are created. The hops which Jennings use are grown in southern England and Slovenia and we rubbed a handful in our palms to release the sweet aroma.

The brewery buildings are all steeped in wonderful smells of hops and fermenting beer and I was soon hankering after a pint. Fortunately, the tour includes tastings. Our favourite Jennings beer? Without a doubt, the golden Cocker Hoop!

In the late afternoon sunshine, we strolled along the alleys of colourful houses and found the bright Georgian town hall, the hilltop church and browsed around the wonderful Aladdin's cave that is JB Banks and Son ironmongers.

After taking a taxi back to Lorton, we walked the track up Whin Fell (not a Wainwright) above Lorton Vale, a 4½-mile round trip.

We were hoping to see the sunset, but the steep path took us longer than we expected and the sun had disappeared by the time we topped the ridge. This is still a ➤

Essentials

HOW LONG

Two nights

WHEN

We visited in October, a beautiful time of year in the Lake District

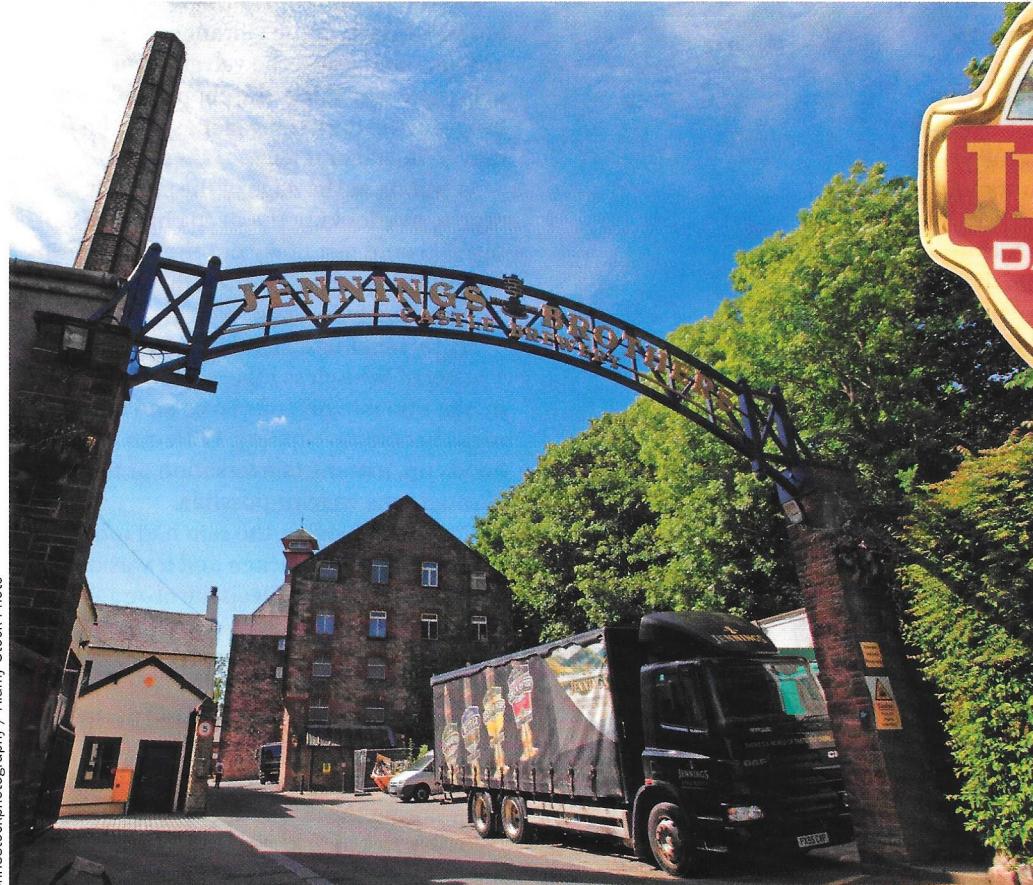


HOW MUCH

Fuel average 34mpg (280 miles)	£42
Site fees.....	£40
Entrance fees two adults: brewery tour	£18
Public transport taxi from Cockermouth to Lorton.....	£9.50
TOTAL	£109.50

BELOW LEFT Jennings Brewery, Cockermouth

BELOW Jennings Dark Mild beer pump label



drink Alan King / Alamy Stock Photo

INFORMATION

Comprehensive site for the north Lakes and Cockermouth

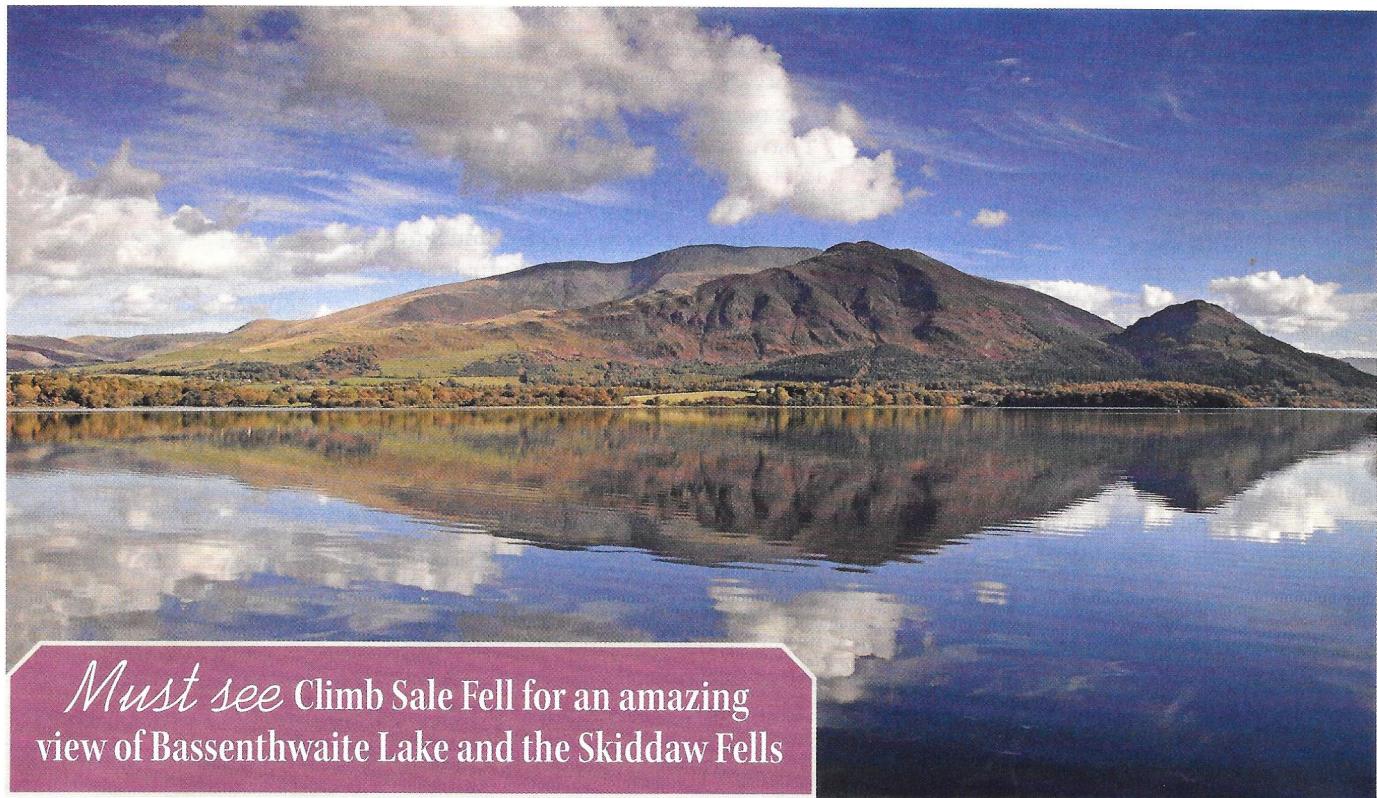
cockermouth.org.uk

A handy guide to Buttermere and the Lake District

buttermereweb.co.uk

All you need to know about this great Lakeland brewery

jenningsbrewery.co.uk



Andy Stothert

Must see Climb Sale Fell for an amazing view of Bassenthwaite Lake and the Skiddaw Fells

tremendous viewpoint over Lorton Vale and West Cumbria, though.

On our final day in the Lakes, we pulled into the car park under the distinctive lump of Rannerdale Knotts (another Wainwright) by Crummock Water, as we were being battered by driving rain.

Trusting the forecast, which promised drier weather later, we sat out the weather, occasionally looking at the beautiful view or watching the Herdwick sheep standing stoically in the rain.

Cars arrived and, if they were lucky (or well prepared), the occupants had a flask and a newspaper – but I am sure they all wished they owned a motorhome!

Eventually the rain stopped and we set off up the lovely valley below Rannerdale Knotts to Whiteless Pike and on to Wandope (2,533 feet above sea level).

It is about 6½ miles to the top of Wandope and back with about 2,300 feet of ascent; the cloud was high and navigation was easy on the obvious path.

There are sections where the trail is steep and craggy. With lots of stops for photograph, the walk took us just over four hours, but plenty of people could do it much more quickly.

For the most part, it was just us and the tough Herdwick sheep out on these fells and I felt privileged to be immersed in such impressive scenery.

ABOVE The impressive bulk of Skiddaw from the shore of Bassenthwaite Lake

The breeze kept the clouds moving and our day alternated between sunshine and clouds, giving ever-changing views that expanded as we climbed higher.

On the summit of Wandope I twirled around, taking in the vibrancy of the autumn landscape, the velvet green of the fells in the sunshine, the copper-coloured bracken, the dark scree slopes and the slate-grey of the distant fells.

Standing at the edge of the summit crown, overlooking the deep chasm of Sail Beck, I could just make out the shimmering blue of Derwentwater through the intersecting fells.

As we negotiated the last steep and stony section of Whiteless Pike, a shower rushed in, the rain stinging our faces and the rocks becoming slippery. With our cagoule hoods up, making conversation or taking photographs were impossible.

Back in the valley, the rain had intensified the colour of the bracken and it was an almost unbelievable deep burnt-orange that reflected across the dark sky.

By the time we reached the 'van, it was sunny again!

Back home, Anthony updated his list. With 120 now ticked off, he still had 94 Wainwrights to climb. I think you will find us exploring the different corners of the Lake District for some years to come – and that suits me, whatever the weather. **mmm**

The campsite

The Wheatsheaf Inn, Low Lorton, Cockermouth, Cumbria CA13 9UW

01900 85199

wheatsheafinn
lorton.co.uk

March – November

Two adults, pitch and electric: £20