

A land for ALL SEASONS

Enjoy the natural beauty of the Lake District all year round; there's plenty to do, whatever the weather!

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY: Carol Kubicki



Carol Kubicki...

...and her husband, Anthony, use their Devon Tempest to pursue their hobbies of walking and cycling while exploring historical and natural environments

Standing on top of Sour Howes, not a soul in sight, my husband and I had to remind ourselves we were just a hop and skip away from the bustle of Bowness-on-Windermere, the Lake District's busiest resort. Sour Howes is a lowly grassy fell, 483m (1,585ft) high and on the edge of the central Lake District fells, so it is not surprising people don't flock here.

But it is a great viewpoint, one of Wainwright's fells and a first-rate walk on a glorious autumn day. Below us was an intricate patchwork of dry stone walled fields and, across the valley, the white buildings of Troutbeck village were strung out along the hillside and the ribbon of Windermere glimmered in the low sunshine.

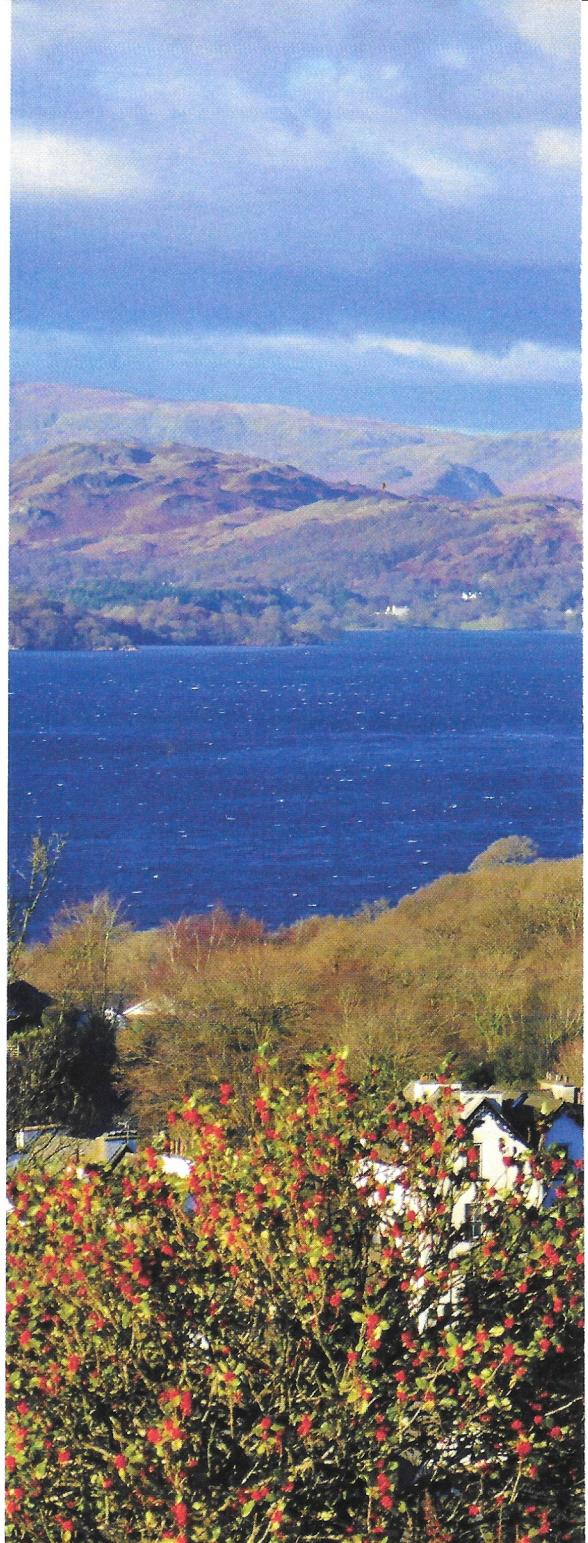
The knobbly terrain of Sour Howes makes it difficult to identify the highest point and so we had run up every hummock to be sure before following a dry stone wall north towards our second summit, Sallows (516m/1,693ft). We returned to Troutbeck via Garburn Pass, a packhorse road linking Troutbeck with Kentmere. Looking back to Sour Howes, we watched a peregrine falcon hovering over the ridge.

Since Lake District tourism began, this southern corner has been the easiest to access and attractions and campsites followed the crowds. Although I love the Lake District, in recent years I've headed for the quieter northern fells; it was time to rediscover Windermere and its surroundings.

After a quick stroll around the remarkable conservation village of

RIGHT From Biskey Howe you look over the slate roof tops of Bowness-on-Windermere

“In the sunshine the lake was a stunning indigo colour, the breeze whipping up small white waves”



Troutbeck – its traditional Lake District buildings include Townend, a National Trust seventeenth century farmhouse –we drove down to Bowness-on-Windermere.

We stopped at Hammarbank viewpoint to look over Windermere to the Langdale Fells. In the sunshine the lake was a stunning indigo colour, the breeze whipping up small white waves.

At the lakeside we found the crowds; families were feeding the wildfowl, young people were on the shore posing for photographs covered head-to-toe in pigeons and doves and older people were wrapped up ready for a boat trip around the islands. I was keen to take to the water, but Anthony ➤



Trip summary

OUR MOTORHOME

2015 Devon Tempest on a Renault Master MWB 2.3-litre Energy DCI.

This is our second Devon Conversions 'van. At 5.30m we think it's enormous and, with a washroom, also luxurious



2015 Devon Tempest

THE JOURNEY

We travelled from home in the Greater Manchester area to the Lake District via the M61 and M6. We spent four days exploring in November

THE COSTS

Fuel average 34mpg.....	£27.50
Site fees.....	£81.20
Attractions two adults: Blackwell, Abbot Hall Art Gallery/Museum of Lakeland Life and Industry.....	£30
Parking Kendal.....	£1

170 miles

Total £139.70

INFORMATION



Blackwell, the Arts & Crafts House

blackwell.org.uk

Museum of Lakeland Life & Industry

lakelandmuseum.org.ukabbothall.org.ukwindermereinfo.co.ukvisitscumbria.comvisit-kendal.co.uklowsizerghbarn.co.uk

Parking information

southlakeland.gov.uk

persuaded me that warming mugs of tea in a comfortable café were what we needed.

One of the reasons we enjoyed staying at Braithwaite Fold Camping and Caravanning Club site is that it is both a peaceful oasis and only a 10-minute walk from lively Bowness. Tucked into a sheltered bay halfway down the 10½-mile-long lake, Bowness-on-Windermere was just a cluster of houses around the ferry in the seventeenth century.

Wandering through the winding narrow streets near the Hole in t'Wall, Bowness' oldest pub, I could still get a feel for the old Westmoreland settlement. In 1847 the railway came to nearby Windermere town and Lake District tourism snowballed as day-trippers flooded in.

That evening we walked to a cosy pub with a log fire for a delicious meal and a pint of good beer. Strolling back by the dark cemetery under a clear, star-filled sky I used the stargazing app on my phone to find Taurus and Gemini, as well as the familiar constellations of the Plough and Orion.

Tourism around Windermere has a well-established heritage. Around 200 years ago, William Wordsworth published his *Guide to the Lakes*, sharing the beauty of the area with a wide readership.

A century later, Alfred Wainwright first visited the Lake District from his Lancashire home. The story goes that, getting off the train at Windermere, Wainwright took the path by the station to Orrest Head viewpoint, a walk that changed his life.

Wainwright described what he saw as being "though a curtain had dramatically been torn aside, beheld a truly magnificent view." Eleven years later he moved to Kendal and, by the 1960s, his quirky *Pictorial Guides* had become favourites, encouraging many walkers on to the fells.

On a sunny and windy morning we made our own climb of Orrest Head. The gravel path climbs through the woods and there is now an orientation table on the prominent crag. On this fine day, it was a popular spot.

We soaked in the 360 degree views, Windermere in one direction and the green ridges of the Kirkstone Pass fells to the other.

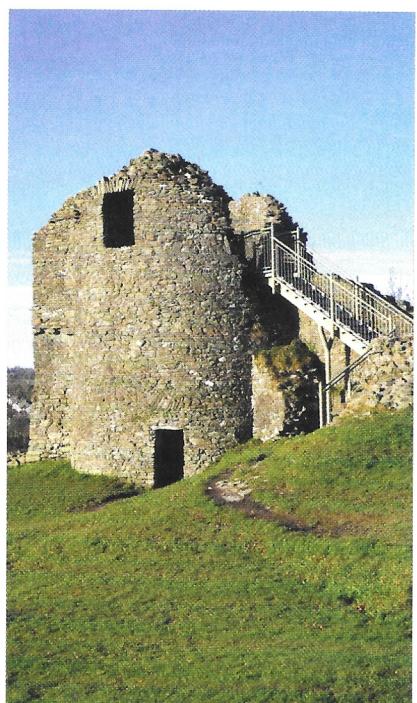
Back in Bowness we browsed shop windows of gifts, chocolates and artisan gin and found another cosy café for a warming coffee. I discovered that there is an excellent network of short walks radiating from Bowness, each offering fantastic views away from the hustle and bustle and we climbed the hillside streets into woodland and onto Biskey Howe.

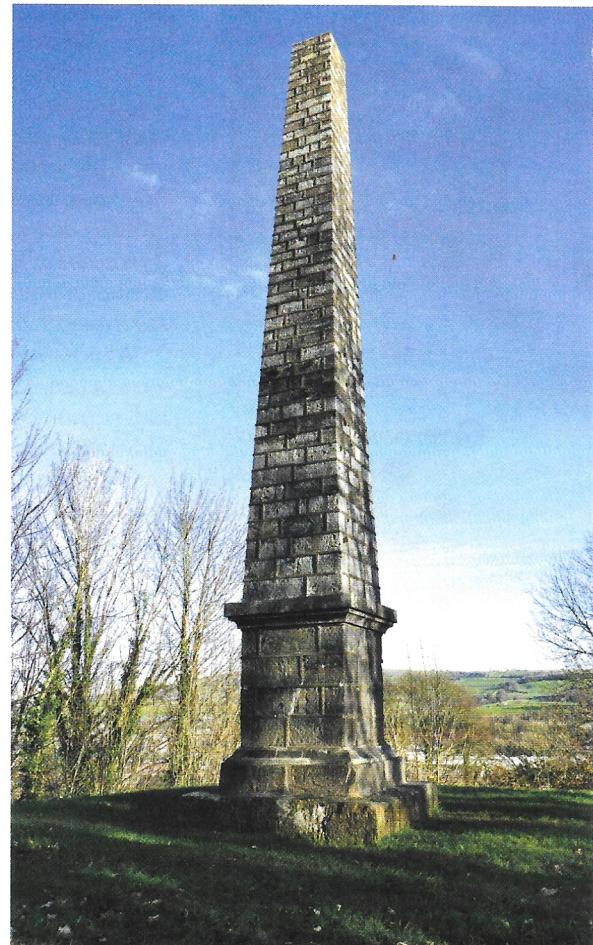
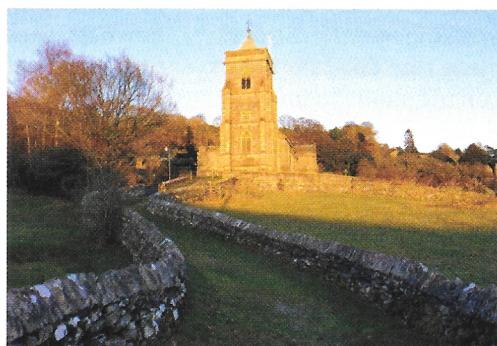
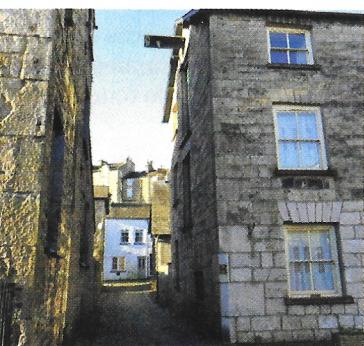
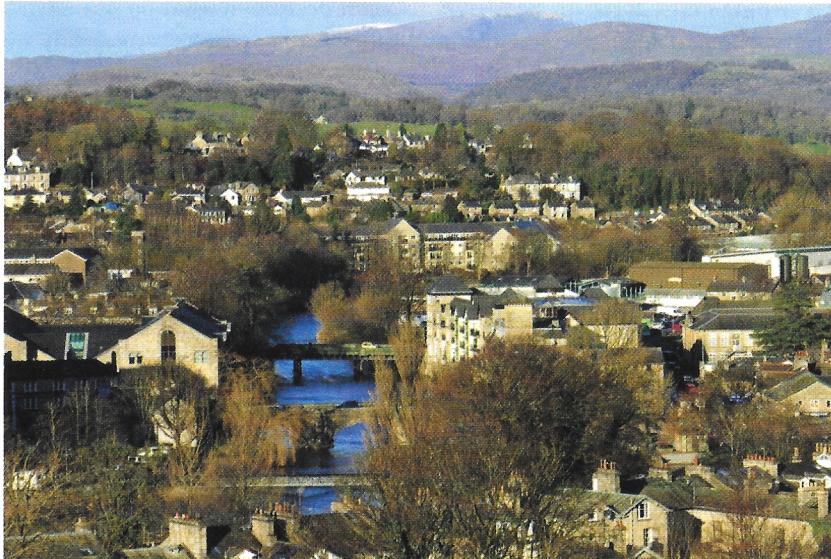
Looking across the panorama over the rooftops of Bowness, many built from stone from the Biskey Howe quarry, I could see the tiny Lady Holme Island on the lake with the stunning backdrop of fells beyond.

While the masses came for day trips by train, wealthy Lancashire industrialists bought into the Lake District splendour by building large holiday homes overlooking Windermere. The next day we drove to Blackwell, an exquisite Arts and Crafts house south of Bowness. ▶

BELOW LEFT Walking up the grassy slopes of Sour Howes

BELOW RIGHT The ruins of Kendal Castle





ABOVE CLOCKWISE The view over Kendal from its ruined castle; the obelisk on the site of the first Kendal Castle; St Mary's Church in Crosthwaite; Collin Croft in Kendal

Blackwell was built as a holiday home for a wealthy Manchester brewer in a traditional style with cylindrical pepper-pot chimneys and an asymmetrical design that could have grown organically. Inside, visitors are made so welcome that I didn't want to leave.

The layout makes the most of the striking views over Windermere, with window seats that encourage you to linger. Cosy inglenooks around graceful fireplaces furnished with books and magazines invite visitors to curl up and make themselves at home. I sat in the inglenook in the Main Hall, admiring the colourful peacock frieze above the wooden panels; a young man sat at the piano and began playing for his son.

The architect made eye-catching use of natural light and focused on rustic motifs in carvings and stained glass. The White Drawing Room was flooded with light,

"I glanced back to take in the gorgeous view of the church, radiant in the setting sun"

the views over the lake reflected in glass panels behind slender columns topped with delicate, carved, flower-like capitals.

Not wanting to waste the sunny evening on our way to the Windermere Camping and Caravanning Club site, we drove the pretty way along the Lyth Valley.

We stopped in Crosthwaite, tucked under Whitbarrow Scar in the heart of the sheltered valley, for a short walk.

This delightful area is often overlooked in the rush to get to Windermere; come here in spring and the valley is filled with snow-white blossom adorning the famous damson trees. In September local damsons will be on sale.

Behind the seventeenth century Punchbowl Inn, a winding walled lane leads from St Mary's Church to the burial ground. I glanced back to take in the gorgeous view of the church, radiant in the setting sun.

Coming down the hill to the riverside town of Kendal, my principal impression was of rows of grey-slate Victorian terraced streets. In the nineteenth century tourists bypassed industrial Kendal but, today, it is popular with day-trippers. As we made our third tense circuit of the one-way system,



trying to find a parking spot for a high-top 'van, I unhelpfully suggested that travelling in by train might have been easier.

Kendal Castle is the perfect place to start a walking tour as the pattern of the town is laid out below you; the River Kent meanders through the centre and the site of Kendal's first simple motte and bailey castle is on the opposite hillside.

After 1066, Norman knights were granted barony titles and land and Kendal's baron soon outgrew the small castle.

By the mid-thirteenth century the baron had built an impressive curtain-wall castle with six towers and a moat in a commanding position over the developing market town. Just 400 years later this was a picturesque ruin and is now a public park.

Today an obelisk, erected in memory of the 'revolution' of 1688, stands on the mound of the first castle. We climbed the streets of Kendal, taking a meandering route towards Serpentine Wood. Exploring the steep streets and rows of terraced houses and passing the old Beast Banks Post Office (the inspiration for Greendale Post Office in John Cunliffe's *Postman Pat* books), I spotted the obelisk between the houses. I learned

TOP TIPS

Parking for walks up **Sour**

Howes and Sallows is at

Church Bridge, Troutbeck.

From Windermere on the A592, turn left down a lane as soon as you cross a small bridge before the church.

Parking is immediately on the left for about six vehicles (under 6m/19ft 8in long).

Trains to **Kendal** run from

Windermere, stopping at Staveley and Burneside approximately every hour.

Staveley station is a 1½-mile walk from the Windermere CCC site. Windermere station is a similar distance from the Braithwaite Fold CCC Site

that the 'revolution' was the invasion of William of Orange, overthrowing the Roman Catholic James II. The rule of William and Mary brought religious freedom for Protestant dissenters such as the Quakers, a movement born in Cumbria.

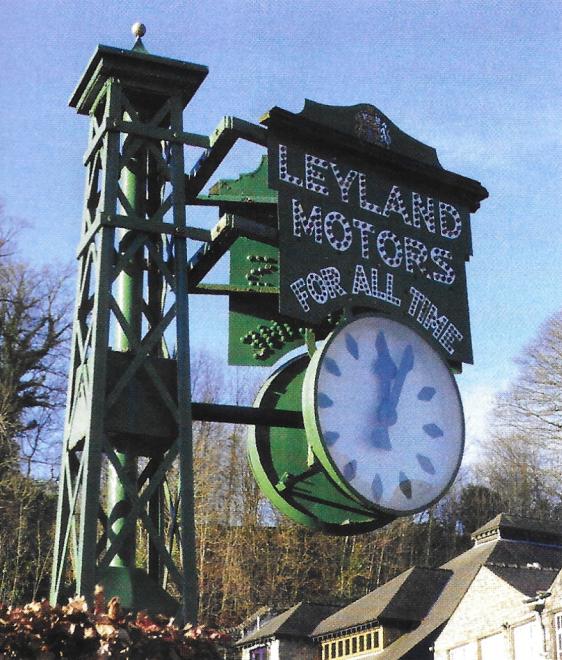
We eventually reached Serpentine Wood, the beech woodland criss-crossed with paths over limestone bedrock, the carpet of bronze leaves glowed in the low winter light. The sounds of the town were soon lost and all I could hear were the scolding call of blackbirds, with glimpses of Kendal and the surrounding fells through the bare trees.

Back in the town centre we chose a charming café in the medieval gatehouse of Sandes Hospital. Founded by a former mayor of Kendal, Sandes provided eight almshouses and a school, the master living in the rooms that are now the café. Set in the wall you can still see the iron collecting box asking people to remember the poor.

It was the wool trade that attracted workers to Kendal and, walking down Kendal's main street, I got a sense of how this industry forged Kendal's unique shape.

As the town expanded in the eighteenth century, trades established in what are ➤

ABOVE Orrest Head rewards a short walk with fantastic views to the eastern fells



now called 'yards' branching out from the main street in parallel rows. Each narrow strip of land was originally a medieval tenanted plot. Today, the surviving yards are numbered and have become tourist attractions, many with historical information boards.

Along Yard 39 were tanners, coopers and joiners and the famous Kendal snuff manufacturer, Gawith Hoggarth. Others had breweries, blacksmiths and shoemakers, as well as woollen mills, stables and workers' cottages. What noisy and malodorous places these would have been a couple of hundred years ago! We explored Collin Croft, which gives a good impression of the original layout and Yard 28, renamed after Alfred Wainwright, has slate reproductions of some of his drawings.

Following the long Tanners Yard down to the River Kent, we strolled along the attractive riverside path. The post-industrial River Kent is clear and pretty and we watched a pair of goosanders diving and swimming along the gravel bed.

Reaching the elegant Georgian Abbot Hall we opted to visit the art gallery that the building now houses; with works from internationally famous artists, this is a world-class attraction. As well as admiring works from household names, I spent some time in the room dedicated to Kendal-born artist, George Romney, a fashionable eighteenth century portrait painter.

Behind Abbot Hall is the Museum of Lakeland Life and Industry. This cosy museum will have something for everyone.

ABOVE LEFT The Leyland Motors Clock in Kendal

ABOVE RIGHT Blackwell's White Drawing Room

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outandaboutlive.co.uk/campsite-finder

The wooden examples in the museum are exquisite hand-carved implements used in the woollen industry. In a piece-work trade these knitting sheaths carried one needle, thus freeing up a knitter's hand and helping them work faster. These hand-carved knitting sheaths were often given as gifts and passed down through families.

After another peaceful night on the campsite we left for home, stopping at Low Sizergh Barn for a parting brew. Rain had set in so we skipped the dairy farm trail and went straight for a browse in the farm shop and bought some local cheese. If you come here in the late afternoon you can watch the cows being milked.

Looking back on our few days, I found I enjoyed following the crowds as much as avoiding them. Windermere and Kendal had revealed some peaceful hidden corners, fascinating indoor attractions, stunning views and plenty of welcoming cafés. **mmm**

WE STAYED AT

Braithwaite Fold Camping and Caravanning Club Site, Glebe Road, Bowness-on-Windermere, Cumbria LA23 3HB

01539 442177

campingandcaravanningclub.co.uk

1 February - 2 January

Two adults, pitch and electric:

From £18.80

Windermere Camping and Caravanning Club Site

Ashes Lane, Staveley, Kendal, Cumbria LA8 9JS

01539 821119

campingandcaravanningclub.co.uk

14 March - 6 January

Two adults, pitch and electric:

From £17.30