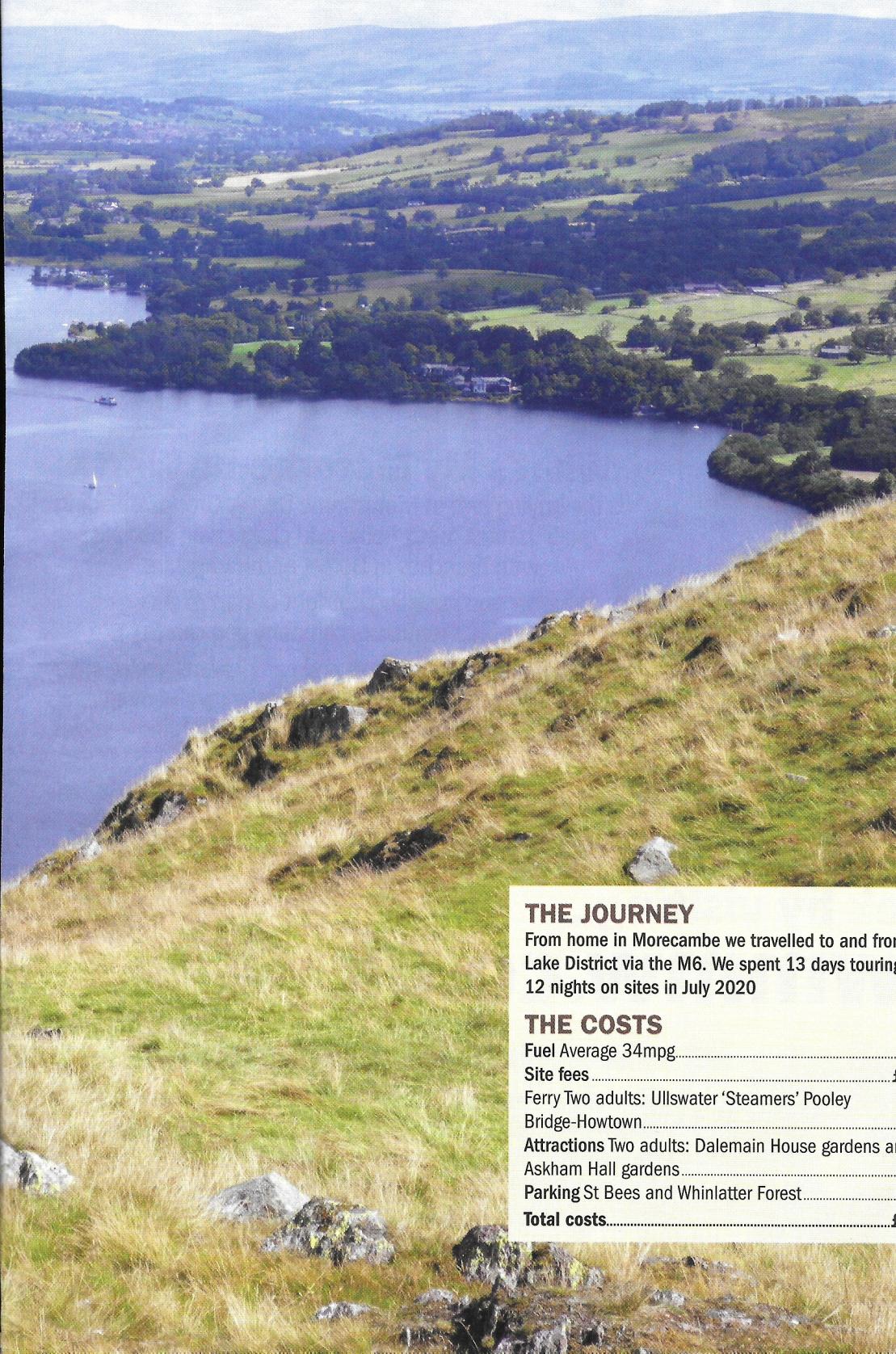


Bag a break in the **Lake District**



Tackling one Wainwright after another reaps rich rewards for our hill-walking duo as they revel in the beauty of the fells

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY: Carol Kubicki



THE JOURNEY

From home in Morecambe we travelled to and from the Lake District via the M6. We spent 13 days touring with 12 nights on sites in July 2020

THE COSTS

Fuel Average 34mpg.....	£37.28
Site fees.....	£291.03
Ferry Two adults: Ullswater 'Steamers' Pooley Bridge-Howtown.....	£14.80
Attractions Two adults: Dalemain House gardens and Askham Hall gardens.....	£25
Parking St Bees and Whinlatter Forest.....	£9.10
Total costs.....	£377.21

US AND OUR 'VAN



Carol Kubicki...

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



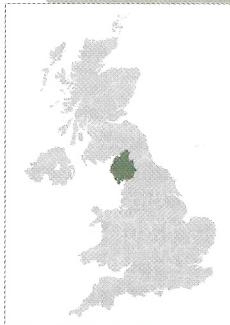
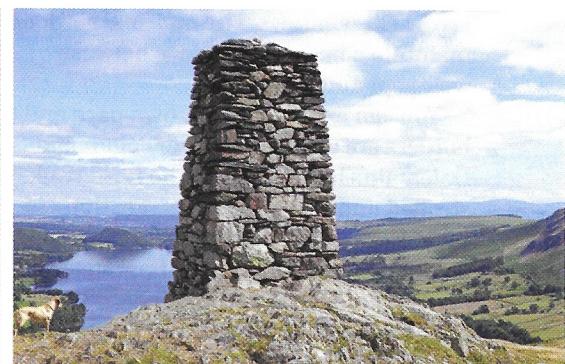
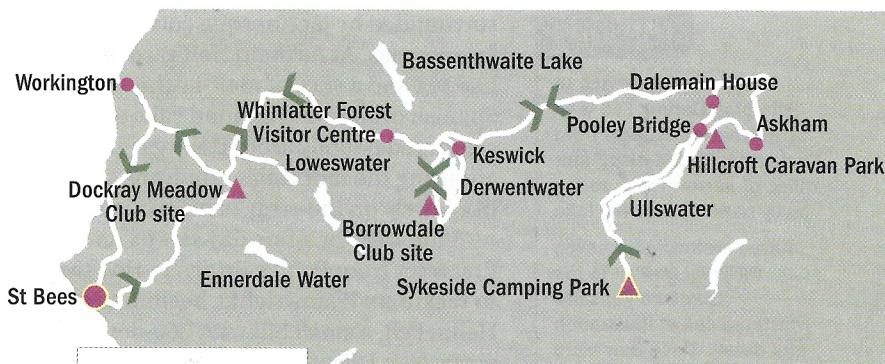
2015 Devon Tempest on a Renault Master MWB 2.3-litre. This is our third blue campervan and we have called them all the 'Blue Bus'

LEFT Ullswater bends and curls around the fells

BELOW Common spotted orchids are fairly easy to find on the Lake District fells

238 miles





INFORMATION

Routes to 214 fells listed in the pictorial guides

 wainwrightroutes.co.uk

Keep a log of the Lakeland fell walks

 walklakes.co.uk

ABOVE RIGHT The impressive summit cairn of Hallin Fell can be seen from the lake

BETWEEN Colourful borders at Dalemain House

When I promised to love and cherish my partner Anthony, I don't remember the vow to follow him up boggy hillsides, my boots soaked and a cold wind whistling around us – although what we laughingly call our 'honeymoon' was a hint! That trip to the Isle of Skye with 15 friends focused, not on romance, but the completion of the Cuillin Ridge, a gruelling two-day scramble that proved too much for the youthful Anthony.

I share Anthony's enthusiasm for hill walking, but was still somewhat surprised when, at the age of 40, he announced his intention to join the Wainwright baggers' club. This involves ticking off 214 hills, ranging in height from Borrowdale's 951ft-high Castle Crag to England's highest mountain, Scafell Pike (3,210ft).

They are listed in Alfred Wainwright's series of seven guidebooks, but were never intended as a to-do list; Wainwright insisted that fell walking was not a competitive sport. Back then we had climbed the big fells and completing the rest didn't seem too daunting – but more than 20 years later Anthony still had 47 Wainwrights to go!

These were my thoughts as I plodded

through swirling mist up Hart Side above Ullswater. I squished my sodden toes, wondering if this hardship was grounds for divorce when I spotted a short-eared owl, wings spread, hunting low over the marshy ground. Once again these Lakeland fells had lifted my spirits with an astonishing sight and thoughts of separation disappeared.

Not surprisingly, we had the questionable shelter of the summit cairn to ourselves and we ate lunch watching the ever-circling owl and the slowly clearing mist. By the time we were descending, we were in T-shirts, with the glittering splendour of Ullswater below us. Skylarks sang overhead and a ringlet butterfly flitted between flowers.

Anthony is the Wainwright counter; I have no idea what my tally is, but I have been sucked into his goal. The Lake District is close to home and we generally visit for a day or two but, seeing the finish line in sight, we decided to take a longer and more targeted Lakeland holiday.

Surrounded by craggy fells and with a pub, Sykeside Camping Park has been a favourite campsite for years. It therefore seems inconceivable that we have never climbed the steep path up Scandale Pass and onto Middle Dodd and Red Scree before, but the list doesn't lie. It was a sunny day and peering down the crags to the tiny Kirkstone Pass Inn far below, while swifts shrilled around our heads, was sublime.

The weather in the Lake District is rarely settled and the next day was blustery and showery as we joined friends in Patterdale at the end of Ullswater to ascend Place Fell. By the time we reached the col, the gusts were strong enough to knock us off our stride. We decided it was safe to carry on and were rewarded with views to the Pennines from our sheltered summit picnic spot. The July hail didn't arrive until we were descending, the stones stinging my face.

Next day was a rest day spent visiting the gardens of Dalemain House. Visitors enter through a charming medieval cobbled courtyard enclosed by stone barns with ▶



arrow-slit windows. The informal gardens maintain a beautiful balance between well-kept and natural.

You can explore at your own pace and the borders are a glorious riot of colour, but Dalemain's best feature is the Rose Walk. I strolled under the archways breathing in their scent. A bush of beautiful tangerine-coloured roses with a spicy fragrance caught my eye. Called Lady Marmalade, it reminded me that Dalemain's owners are also passionate about marmalade (they sell unusual varieties and hold annual awards).

We moved on to Pooley Bridge, a pretty village at the northern end of Ullswater with a bustling holiday feel and quiet corners that hark back to its days as a market and fishing community. This was our first visit and, as we sat in the sun with our cornets of local ice cream, I thanked Wainwright for once again bringing us somewhere new.

The summer days settled into a pattern of wet mornings and bright afternoons. We followed the lane by the campsite onto gently rising moorland tracks.

Among the bracken we found The Cockpit, a Bronze Age stone circle that is no Stonehenge, but is still impressive.

It is said that Wainwright described Askham as the old county of Westmorland's prettiest village. What makes Askham special is its tidy village greens, each

TOP TIPS

The best approach to climbing Darling Fell is to drive from the A5086 from Cockermouth and along four miles of narrow lanes to the layby parking near the lake

Alfred Wainwright's seven *Pictorial Guides to the Lakeland Fells* are masterpieces of illustration and detail. Since they were first published in the 1950s and 1960s they have been revised and now include information on parking as well as route guides

surrounded by picturesque cottages and farmhouses. At Askham Hall gardens we had tea and a slice of melt-in-the-mouth Spanish orange and almond cake and sauntered happily around the gardens, admiring the morning's raindrops sitting like jewels on the array of huge hosta leaves.

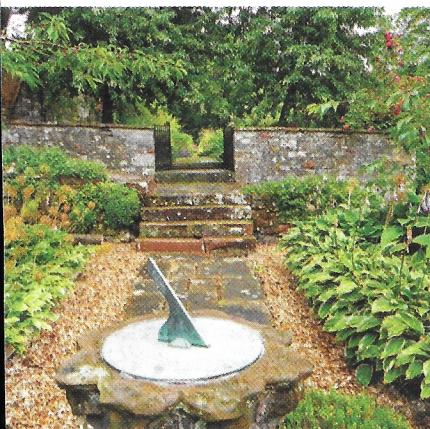
A forecast for a fine day saw us on the first ferry from Pooley Bridge to Howtown to tackle six Wainwrights, beginning with Hallin Fell, a small hill with 360-degree views over Ullswater and the fells. The lake curled below us, dotted with gliding yachts and shuttling ferries.

Number two, Steel Knotts, is a steep ascent from St Peter's Church, Martindale, and the shepherds rounding up their fellside sheep, calling and whistling to their dogs, were a welcome distraction. Below us lay the remote Bannerdale and the red roof of the old shooting lodge that belongs to Dalemain House.

The next four Wainwrights demonstrate

"We were in a sea of flowering marsh valerian and meadowsweet with swallows swooping over our heads"





that not every one of these hills is attractive and chosen for some distinguishing feature. These grassy mounds roll into each other and would be a navigational nightmare in bad weather.

Another damp morning gave us a chance to visit Keswick. When the sun came out we fitted in two easy Wainwrights from Whinlatter Forest Visitor Centre.

The second hill, Barf, has an unusual name and you might notice a whitewashed rock pillar known as the Bishop of Barf on its lower slopes. Volunteers refresh the paint every year so it always stands out.

The fell walking from the wooded Borrowdale campsite is unbeatable, as were our magical evening strolls around the shore of Derwentwater. Crossing the walkways over the wetlands we were in a sea of flowering marsh valerian and meadowsweet with swallows swooping over our heads. On the River Derwent we watched a dipper preen on a rock and fly low along the water, its beating wings a blur.

Our ascent of Great Crag through Borrowdale's lush hanging oak woodlands was delightful and the open fell was a carpet of flowering heather, yellow bog asphodel and common spotted orchids and we picked ripe bilberries from bushes. From Great Crag and the day's second Wainwright, the summit of Grange Fell, we looked down on the secluded hamlet of Watendlath and Watendlath Tarn huddled among the fells.

We reached High Spy, Anthony's 180th

ABOVE CLOCKWISE Dark green fritillary among the heather above Borrowdale; The pattern of fields and fells is distinctive of the Lake District; The rambling gardens of Askham Hall

FAR LEFT Looking across to Skiddaw from the slopes of Barf

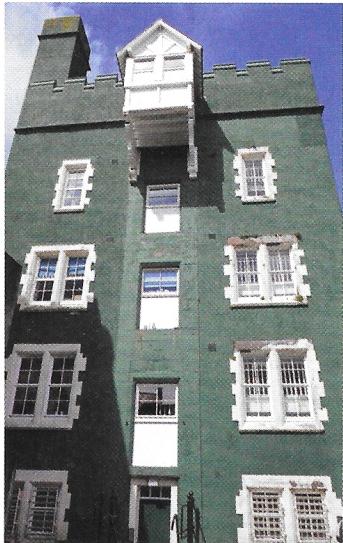
BELOW Ullswater 'Steamers' provide useful ferries and day-long cruises

Wainwright, by a pleasant path alongside a tumbling stream, wild flowers growing in the grassland and among the rocks, including bright yellow saxifrages.

On the way to Dockray Meadow Caravan and Motorhome Club site we picked up a couple of easy Wainwrights above Loweswater, a small lake in a chain after Buttermere and Crummock Water. A steep path took us up Darling Fell; it's not a Wainwright but, with such an attractive name and superb views over the three lakes, you have to wonder why not.

Maybe Alfred Wainwright was no romantic, but I am and Darling Fell was an ➤





ABOVE LEFT Handsome former brewery building in Workington



opportunity to kiss Anthony. We only had 33 Wainwrights to go, but marital harmony would help every step.

Bad weather arrived with low clouds and a strong wind as we parked on the narrow road by Blakeley Raise Stone Circle to climb Grike. I had hoped the wind would move the clouds but, huddling in Grike's impressive summit shelter, we remained cocooned in white and lost from the rest of the world.

We continued to Crag Fell and sat in its lee looking over where we knew Ennerdale Water to be, but never had a view. Our navigational skills got us back to the track and it was a relief when we left the mist and could see our way again.

The rain was heavy by the time we

returned to Dockray Meadow and pounded on the 'van the next morning so we opted to drive to Workington, where we walked through the park of Workington Hall, found the stunning green old brewery building on the river and, in the town centre, admired the Lookout, a complex clock sculpture with cameras that looks like a space satellite.

The 182-mile Coast to Coast footpath Wainwright described in his 1973 guide starts at St Bees on the Cumbrian Coast. The rain had stopped and we had a bracing walk along the shoreline. In the strong winds, the waves crashed onto the pebbly beach and hardy families played on the shore. Away from the coast it was calmer and, at Ennerdale Water, we walked to the lake on paths through the bracken, finding rowan trees with bright orange berries and pretty pale blue harebells.

The sunshine returned for our last day, allowing us to complete Lank Rigg, another unpretentious grassy hill that is often the Wainwright baggers territory. After all that rain the River Calder, which crossed our path, was deep enough to submerge the stepping stones. We removed our boots and paddled across, the refreshing cold water putting a zing in our steps. At the summit tarn, we gazed at the clouds reflecting in the blue water and pointing out the Isle of Man beyond the Cumbrian coast.

Driving home, we counted up Anthony's Wainwright tally. We'd ticked off 19 fells together during our trip, not all of them distinctive, but each enjoyable in some way. With only 28 left, I think our marriage will survive a few more ups and downs! 

WE STAYED AT

Sykeside Camping Park, Brothers Water, Patterdale, Cumbria CA11 0NZ

01768 482239 sykeside.co.uk

All year

Two adults, pitch and electric: From £23

Hillcroft Park, Pooley Bridge, Cumbria CA10 2LT

01768 486363

hillcroftpark.co.uk

1 March - 6 January

Two adults, pitch and electric: From £27

Borrowdale Caravan and Motorhome Club Site, Manesty, Keswick, Cumbria CA12 5UG

01768 777275 camc.com

12 April - 1 November

Two adults, pitch and electric: From £18.60

Dockray Meadow Caravan and Motorhome Club Site, Lamplugh, Cumbria CA14 4SH

01946 861357 camc.com

12 April - 1 November

Two adults, pitch and electric: From £16.40

ALTERNATIVE SITE

PREMIER PARK 2021 The Old Post Office Campsite, Santon Bridge, Holmrook CA19 1UY

01946 726286

theoldpostofficecampsite.co.uk

All year

Two adults, pitch, electric: From £27

This feature was written in July 2020 as restrictions were being lifted. We are publishing it for your enjoyment and to help you plan future trips. Readers should follow the latest advice before leaving their homes  gov.uk/coronavirus