

W. R. MITCHELL, MBE
18 YEALAND AVENUE
GIGGLESWICK
SETTLE, NORTH YORKS.
BD24 0AY
Tel. (01729) 822371

DOWN YORE WAY

A Walk to the Headwaters of the River Ure (anciently Yore).
1st of Flaming June, 2005



David, Terry, Trevor, Bill, Popsie. Weather: Wet and gusty.

David: *I have often challenged the weather; it usually backs off.*

Prize statement (none attributable): *She had a mind like a rat trap - she'll never let anything go.*

Horticultural quote about the humble parsnip: *Don't let it flower or seed. Shame.*

Nature notes: Lesser black-backed gulls near Colt Park. Heron passes high over car. Oystercatcher feeding, untwitchingly, a yard or two from the road to Newby Head. Meadowsweet on road verges. Buttercups in local pastures.

David was duty chauffeur. He drew the car up in a large space near Thwaite Bridge Farm. We found the first of several lichen-encrusted footpath signs leading us near the upper reaches of the River Ure. The moist fields, and especially those edging the fell, have a goodly number of lapwings which now, having young, were circling and wailing. Damp patches on low ground held carpets of marsh marigolds. We also spotted lady's smock and, of course, the ubiquitous little yellow-petalled plant known as tormentil.

We passed near copses where Popsie was spoilt for choice when gathering a stick with which to taunt us, dropping it ahead of us, then recovering it when we had almost reached it. The Ure was seen to be flowing serenely between drumlins. On the far side was the Dales pad (a former shooting lodge) used by one of the friends of Prince Charles, who has often stayed there. David had heard that he had sampled food at Blades farm, where the food was plain but plentiful.

We passed near a copse that included some Scots pines. A buzzard was seen in flight. It departed, with an angry mistle thrush virtually on its tail. Our feet encountered a stretch of well-worn limestone pavement which, being wet, was like a skating rink. Lapwings (also known as tewits and peewits) continued to circle and they uttered anxious calls.

We entered the territory of a pair of oystercatchers. One bird perched on a wall; the other roused every echo with its shrill calls. We passed Yore House, once the home of the Ewbanks, who moved to Austwick, where they built a big detached home called *er* Yore House. It caused confusion among

Page Two

visiting tradesmen. If one asked a local directions to Yore House, he was usually sent to the home of the local he had approached.

A snipe rose from an area of rush near the river; it zig-zagged away in true snipe style. We switched our attention to the Settle-Carlisle railway, which at that time was being used by diesel-hauled coal trains. Lunds viaduct was in view – not clear view because some of the piers were obscured by well-grown trees in leaf. So we approached Blades Farm, using an unfenced track which had buttercups and a few marsh marigolds on our left and a great spread of marsh marigolds on our right.

The path we had to use had been diverted from the old one, which went through the farmyard. It was also clarty and involve negotiating a stile, the wood of which was wet and slippery. Much of the path had been paddled into a thick dark soup of mud. We left the field by climbing over some wire netting beside the gate. The netting had been used so often, we could step over it. There was also a step stile – then a steady climb to the skyline.

The pastures held a variety of spring flowers, including yellow mountain pansies. At ruined High Dike we selected the best preserved of the outbuildings as our buttying place. Even so, it might be called Skyview, there being relatively few remaining tiles. Trevor settled on a flat stone and then as some rain fell on him, he said: "I've got the bit without the slates."

Bill conducted his usual census of edibles. David – Crisps and Greek sardines. Trevor – goats cheese and cucumber. Terry – sausage. Bill – Tuna. An old tradition was observed when Terry dispensed slices of Victoria sponge cake, made for us by his wife Jean, to whom thanks were extended.

We resumed our walk, seeing – for the first time in situ – one of the new Freedom to Roam signs, tacked on to a post which also had a yellow arrow denoting a footpath. We gained height slowly and were wrapped in drizzle and mist, through which came a fascinating medley of wader calls – the yelping of alarmed curlew, with trills from distant birds; the clear, somewhat mournful whistle of the golden plover; and, of course, the whining *pee-wi* of the lapwing. When mist cleared a little we could make out the forms (if not fine details of plumage) of the various birds. Bill was especially interested in the golden plover, that stood as though on sentinel duty, then scuttered from the skyline to play hide and seek among tufts of coarse grasses.

We were now proceeding with the help of map and compass. The spookiness led Trevor to mention he had bought a set of the works of Conan Doyle, including – presumably – the Exmoor tale of the Baskervilles. (Bill mentioned some of Conan Doyle's local associations; his mother lived for some years at Masongill, and Doyle was married at Thornton-in-Lonsdale church. Terry contributed the information that Doyle had gone to school at Stonyhurst).

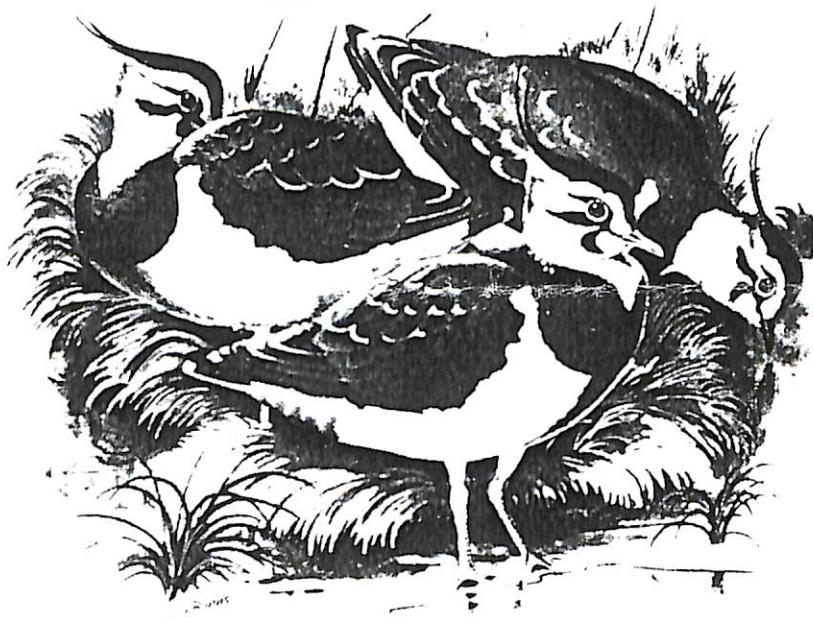
A skylark ascended like a feathered helicopter and sprayed the ground with song. In the end, our progress was determined by seeing posts with footpath signs; they eventually led us into a conifer forest, an alien intrusion on what had been an attractive valley – Cotterdale. On our slow progress down forest rides, avoiding slow-sweeping branches, we heard pheasant calls and eventually located a black pheasant with a brood of chicks (of various hues!).

Eventually, we broke cover, crossed a beck on big squared up stones serving as stepping stones (these being secured to the bed of the beck by having iron posts driven through them). Oystercatchers abounded. Popsie scent what must have been a fox, for the trail ended at a circlet of white feathers – presumably the

Page Three

fox's prey. We gained the road near a building echoing with the yapping of gundogs, followed the road out of the hamlet, found a (lichened) direction post that pointed to the heights, and ascended a path on a tract of moor tufty with cotton grass and circled by noisy curlews. By watching a shepherd on an ATV and two dogs rounding up sheep, we managed a ^{teot}walk part way up the hill. (The shepherd shouted his instructions. Popsie watched the proceedings with interest and, happily, did not attempt to join in).

We crossed Lady Anne's Way (to Pendragon Castle) and descended to Thwaite Bridge, en route seeing some of the travelling folk, with horse-drawn vardo's (roofed by green tarpaulins), heading for Mallerstang and, eventually, Appleby horse fair. It was assessed that we had been walking for five and a quarter hours and we had covered seven miles. We celebrated at the Station Inn, Ribbleshead.



Classic whodunnit in North Craven

Masonigill House, between Ingleton and Cowan Bridge, has associations with Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, creator of super-sleuth Sherlock Holmes and author of many early 'whodunnit' stories. Muriel Humphries investigates.

READERS of The Dalesman magazine may remember an interesting article written for the July, 1975, edition by the editor W. R. Mitchell with the intriguing title, "The mystery of Masonigill House". In the article Mr. Mitchell tells of the Waller family and their connection with the family of the celebrated writer of the early 'whodunnit', Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, and the mystery to which he refers is undoubtedly the relationship between Sir Arthur's mother, Mary J. Doyle, and Dr. Bryan Charles Waller, squire of Masonigill.

My interest in this story was re-awakened by the arrival of two letters of inquiry which by indirect means came to me from an American author who is currently planning to publish a new biography of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, there being a great following for him in the USA.

"In piecing together his early life and the life of his father and mother I have encountered a number of problems. One of these has to do with the whereabouts of his parents after they left Edinburgh in 1883 or 1884. It is known they moved to Masonigill House and/or Masonigill Cottage around this time," wrote the author.

"On August 6, 1885, Arthur Conan Doyle married Louisa Hawkins at Thornton-in-Lonsdale Parish Church. Conan Doyle's father was an alcoholic and an epileptic and I believe he may have been kept on or near Masonigill House in a cottage under the supervision of a keeper. This sounded almost like one of Conan Doyle's own mysteries and it was impossible not to start out on the trail, so first for a spot of background knowledge.

Speight tells us that the Wallers were descended from Waltheof, of the father of Earl Godwin, father of Harold II of Hastings fame. Authentic records go back to the battle of Agincourt (1415) when a member of the family took prisoner a member of the French blood royal, acquiring thereby the right to quarter his prisoners arms so that 1/16th quarterings of the old family of Waller is the Royal Arms of France.

Edmund Waller of Buckinghamshire, son of Robert Waller of Amersham, was a celebrated Court poet and administrator of Charles I. His mother was daughter of one John Hampden and sister to another John Hampden, opponent of Charles I.

The Yorkshire branch descended through the poet's second son, another Edmund, who inherited property near Beaconsfield, Benjamin, the eldest son, was disinherited. But to come to more recent times the Masonigill estate was bequeathed to a Mr. Nicholas Procter by his great-uncle, Bryan Waller, on condition he assumed the name and arms of Waller, which he did by Royal Warrant on November 1, 1816, when fourteen years old.

After 1840 Mr. Nicholas Waller resided at Masonigill House regularly. He had a magnificent library including first editions and presentation copies. He died in 1877 and was buried in Thornton-in-Lonsdale churchyard. On his tombstone is written:

"In memory of Nicholas Waller of Masonigill House, born 29th May, 1816, died 12th March, 1877. Also his wife Julia Perry Waller, aged 62 years, died 19th July, 1872."

Also their son Bryan Charles Waller born at Masonigill House July 27th, 1853, and died there November 14th, 1932."

Bryan Charles Waller was an M.D. and had lectured at Edinburgh University. It was probably here that he met the Doyle family, for Arthur Conan Doyle, eldest son of the artist Charles Altamont Doyle, after being educated first at Hodder, the prep school for Stoneyhurst College, Lancashire, from 9-11 years, afterwards at Stoneyhurst then at Feldkirch, Austria, graduated at Edinburgh University, obtaining his M.B. in 1881 and M.D. in 1885.

He was practising as a doctor in Southsea when he published "A Study in Scarlet" in 1887. "The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes" first appeared in The Strand Magazine in 1891.

Doctor Waller had a literary background. His cousin, Adelaide Anne Procter was a poetess, his uncle known as Barry Cornwall, knew all the Lakes poets and Thackeray dedicated "Vanity Fair" to him.

Mrs. Doyle's brother-in-law designed the cover of Punch and her father-in-law was a well-known caricaturist. She knew Thackeray. Mr. Mitchell says that she was 'pert, physically attractive and had literary interests'. She and Dr. Waller had much in common. She had traced her lineage back to the Plantagenet Monarchs, was related distantly to Sir W. Scott and the Percy lines.

When Mrs. Doyle moved to Masonigill is uncertain; but it was probably in 1883 or 1884.

THE Thornton parish registers record that three of Mrs. Doyle's children were married at Thornton Church. On August 6, 1885, Arthur Conan Doyle married Louisa Hawkins, his first wife. In 1895 on December 17, Jane Adelaide, Rose Doyle, aged 20, daughter of Charles Doyle, gent, artist, married Nelson Foley, aged 45, widower, engineer, of the city of Naples, son of Nelson of Trafalgar Foley, gent. The witnesses were, J.F.I.H. Doyle, Bryan Charles Waller, B. M. Doyle, Mary, J. E. Doyle and S. M. Stable, Vicar of Newton-on-Trent, formerly of Thornton-in-Lonsdale.

On April 11, 1899, Bryan Mary Josephine Julia Doyle, married Charles Cyril Ansell. Charles Doyle did not sign the register on any of these occasions; indeed he had been committed to the Crichton Royal Institution, a mental hospital near Dumfries, in 1883 or 1884, for he was indeed an epileptic and an alcoholic.

Writing about Arthur Conan Doyle's marriage at Thornton Church a recent biographer wrote, "August 6, 1885, the marriage took place at the Parish Church near Mary Doyle's cottage, Masonigill, Thornton-in-Lonsdale, where she had removed after committing her husband to the lunatic asylum, near Dumfries" (The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes, by Charles Higham).

Charles Altamont Doyle worked for the Scottish Office of Works as architect, designer and builder. He designed the fountain at Holyrood and a stained glass window in Glasgow Cathedral.

In 1855 he married the 17-year-old daughter of his Irish lodging house keeper Mary Foley. "diminutive, intense and forceful". They had three daughters, Annette, Connie, Lottie and a son Arthur, the youngest, and Charles' income began at £180 p.a. and rose to £200 p.a. by 1859 when Arthur was born.

Charles could not support a family on this meagre pay so he augmented it by sketching criminal trials for it by sketching criminal trials, magazines and illustrated fairy tales, books of rhymes, books about English heroes and hermits. He painted delicate watercolours such

as "The Haunted House" and "The Ghost Coach".

By 1877 there were three more children, one son and two daughters. When his son's story "The Scarlet Letter" was published in book form it was Charles Doyle who illustrated it. The drawings were done in the lunatic asylum and the only hearded Holmes in history represents a young Charles Doyle (1888). In 1893 Charles Doyle swallowed his tongue in an epileptic fit and thus escaped from his earthly troubles.

His incarceration was a closely-kept family secret and the inhabitants of Masonigill were always told that Mrs. Doyle was a widow. The younger daughter Mrs. Angell always known as Dodo used to say that she was born five years after her father died; but this is obviously untrue: According to the marriage register she was 22-years-old in 1899 so was born in 1877 and was 16-years-old when Charles Doyle died. It would appear that she was unaware of her father's existence in the asylum.

The Doyle's were Catholics (late Arthur became a spiritualist) but Louisa Hawkins was a protestant and Arthur's sojourn at Stoneyhurst had turned him from Catholicism so they were married in the protestant church of Thornton-in-Lonsdale.

THERE are several people still living in the Thornton neighbourhood who remember the Doyles and Wallers well and from whom I have gathered the following information.

When Mrs. Doyle had family visitors her cottage was too small and inconvenient to accommodate them. Instead they lodged at Parr Bank Farm, Masonigill, where Miss Margaret Denny's father and mother farmed. Miss Denny was expected to play cricket with Mrs. Doyle's grandchildren who were expected to be respectfully addressed as Master Innes etc., Doyle wrote, "... in this little moor-side village I found that it was impossible to shake off the censorship of one's fellow mortals. When I went forth the rustics would whip up their children as I passed down the village street. We strolled over the moors in the mornings or stood upon the Moorstone Crag (probably Hunts Cross) to watch the red sun sinking beneath the distant waters of Morecambe".

Dr. Waller was not in general practice but would attend patients on request. He had a small cottage in the grounds of Masonigill House which was known as his surgery. In this cottage, now a ruin, was born Jim Kettlewell, the father of Mrs. Kate Mitton whose grandfather Richard Kettlewell came from Scotland to be Dr. Waller's gardener; his son was gardener likewise. Doyle describes it as follows:

"Two little peeping windows, a cracked and weatherbeaten door and a discoloured barrel for catching the rain water, were the only external objects from which ... I saw that the thick bars of iron covered the windows, while the old door was slashed and plated with the same metal ... I drew myself up quickly by the iron bars and glanced through the diamond paned window. The interior of the cottage was lighted by a chemical furnace. By up ... by a chemical distinguish its rich light I could distinguish a great litter of retorts, test tubes and condensers. On the further side of the room was a wooden framework resembling a hen coop and in this, knelt a man".

On one occasion three village lads broke into the cottage and caused an explosion playing with the chemicals.

Dr. Waller visited the village school at Westhouse frequently and one day watched the headmaster, Mr. Dent, caning a boy. He encouraged the head, saying at each stroke, "harder, harder, harder." He was an only child and always had to have his own way even when an

adult. Mrs. Ada Waller came to Thornton Vicarage as a governess and soon set her cap at Dr. Waller. She probably regretted it for he was not very kind to her. She must have known there was a liaison between her husband and Mrs. Doyle. The villagers often saw the latter crossing the grass from the house to her cottage in the early morning. Dr. Waller had a bell placed in her cottage which he rang when he wanted to see her.

She always dressed in dark clothes and wore a bonnet. She drove herself round the countryside in a pony and dog cart made of wicker work. Shortly after the birth of Mrs. Mitton's sister, now Mrs. Edith Glasford, she drove up to the Kettlewells' home to see the baby. She did not descend from the vehicle but held the baby in her arms and when she handed it back she commented that one day it would be able to say that the mother of a famous author had held her in her arms.

Mrs. Waller and Mrs. Doyle both gave parties to which the villagers were invited, but whereas they enjoyed Mrs. Doyle's they did not enjoy Mrs. Waller's. She was rather snobbish. Mrs. Doyle used to visit the private boarding school at Storn Hall on speech days. The school was run by two Misses Brown. I wonder if the Doyle girls were pupils there; but have not found out so far. It may have been merely a social visit. She also visited the Metcalfes at Weatherley and the Fawcetts at Over Hall. When Ingleton Church was re-built in 1836 the vicar of Ingleton was called the Rev. T. D. Sherlock. There was a vicar of this name also at Bentham. Various suggestions have been made for the origin of Conan Doyle's detective's name but I should like to think that this was a local inspiration.

MRS. Doyle left Masonigill about 1920 and died, aged 83, at the home of her son, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, while he and his second wife were visiting Australia in that year. Her other son Innes, died of pneumonia towards the end of the Great War.

Arthur wrote over 1,500 letters his mother at Masonigill cottage. Throughout his life he sought advice on every subject and criticised him furiously, brandishing an ear trumpet at him, on his interest in spiritualism or his upbringing his family.

A story is told by Charles Higham which illustrates her indomitable spirit. One day he took his mother for a ride in his motor car to her home. He alarmed a cart horse so violently that the beast shied to cart tilted over and crashed into one just behind it and Conan Doyle's mother and the two carts were showered with hundreds of turnips. Dragging himself up, his cap and goggles askew, he was astonished to see his mother sitting upright on a pile of vegetables calmly knitting a sweater! She was quite a character.

Dr. Waller died in 1932. It was his wish that his corpse be taken to Thornton Church in his old dog cart but the bearers including the father of the present owners of Masonigill House persuaded Mrs. Waller that it was unsafe and the coffin was pushed on a wheeled bier all the two-and-a-half-miles to Thornton.

When Mrs. Waller died she was cremated and her ashes were interred in her husband's grave not on the fells as she wished. Misted by the headstone on his parents' grave, the gravedigger began to open the wrong grave out was corrected by Mrs. Hartley of Masonigill Hall who was present in the churchyard tending her daughter's grave.

Thus the final chapter of the story was written.

224/236 Walworth Road, London SE17 1JE
Tel: 020-7708 2113 Fax: 020-7701 4489
e-mail: LPCB2000@aol.com

Extracted by IPCB. The contents of the publication from which this extract has been taken is a copyright work and without prior permission may not be copied or reproduced for external purposes or resale.

HUDDERSFIELD DAILY EXAMINER

Circulation ('000): 33

Readership ('000): 83

Display Rate (£/sqcm): £1.52

23 APR 2005

Fell walk guides don't come better than this

Books



Steve Matthews

Keswick and Northern Lakeland
by WR Mitchell and
RGK Gudgeon, Dalesman, £8.95

THERE can have been few more seasoned pairs of feet in the Lake District than those of Bill Mitchell and the late Roy Gudgeon. Together they must offer well over a century of walking experience and an intimate knowledge and love of the landscape.

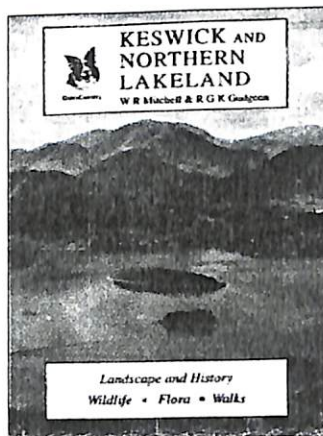
They seem to know every facet of the hills they tread, be readily conversant with the rocks under their feet and the plants and wild life around them. and be aware of the human life the hills have witnessed over the centuries.

A walk with them must have been a very special experience. And the next best thing is this guide.

It is not simply that they know where to find the birds - titmice, treecreepers and goldcrests in the winter larch and pine at Brandlehow - or the orangey spiky flowers of hog asphodel near Tewet Tarn in the summer. They also know that the poet Percy Withers built the house at Abbot's Bay in 1902, sold it 13 years later for £1,200 and that it was last on the market at 1,000 times that price at £1.25 million. And they know where to get full measure in pint pots of tea. All very useful.

Theirs is a wise and considered view of walking.

Their circular walks offer everything from a four-mile jaunt up Cat Bells to a strenuous 10.5 miles around the Coledale Horseshoe, and range in location from Caldbeck to Borrowdale. Their duration is considerably

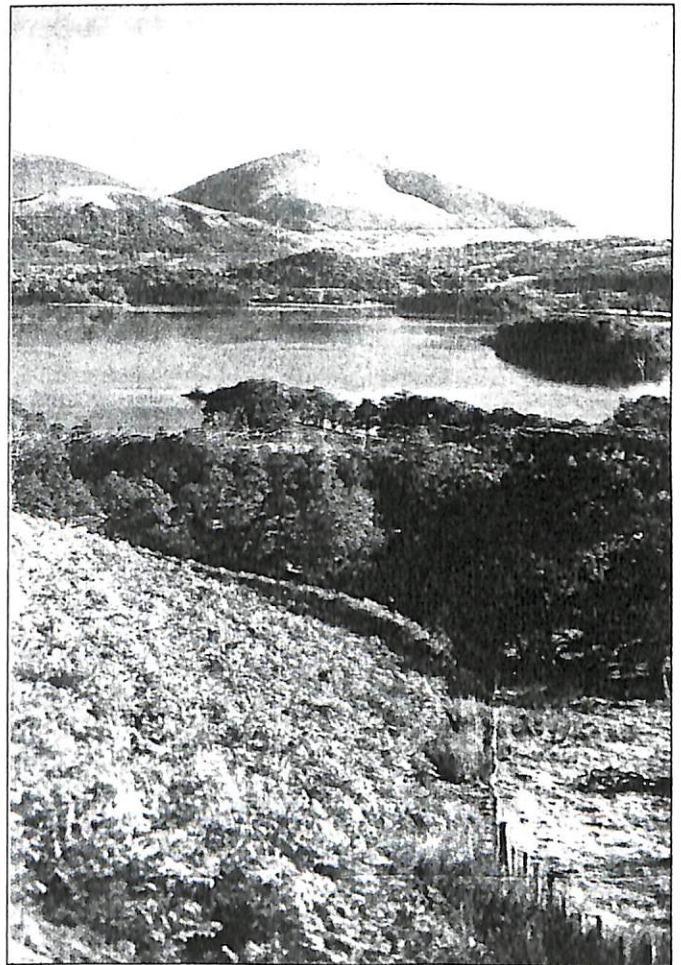


timed: "Each walk takes into account time off to take photographs and to eat, but not to doze."

The walk in Caldbeck includes the Howk. The waterwheel, known as Red Rover, and which powered the bobbin mill, built in 1857, was 42ft in diameter. Further along as you walk alongside the leat that supplied the wheel you might see celandines, dog's mercury and primroses.

Dorothy Wordsworth visited the Howk in 1803 and was enraptured by "the limestone ravine with foaming waters between impressive cliffs". She recalled "limestone rocks, hanging trees, pools and waterbreaks - caves and cauldrons which have been honoured with fairy names and no doubt continue in the fancy of the neighbourhood to resound with fairy revels". The Howk is also known as the Fairy Kirk.

But our ambulant authors are not bedazzled by literary associations. They find Southey's poem on Lodore Falls "clever but somewhat tedious" and, despite the poet's extravagant spouting, the falls themselves are often little more than a trickle. They tell the story of the inevitable American tourist, weary from searching for Southey's vision, who "asked a local man where



● **HILL, DALE AND LAKE:** Derwentwater and Blencarthra from Brandlehow Woods, pictured in this 'delightful walking companion'

he could find the falls. Said the native: "Tha's sat on 'em'."

However, they have more than a touch of poetry in their veins. On a climb up Blencathra from Threlkeld you are told that: "You might look through hundreds of feet of space to see a kestrel, with chestnut back, hovering near the beck. A raven announces itself with husky voice... the unexpected occurs when a peacock butterfly alights on a sun-warmed rock."

Few walking guides do more than provide over-solicitous

instructions on a route that can usually be followed very readily with the aid of an Ordnance Survey map. This book, with its useful introductory essays on geology and natural history, and the intelligent and knowledgeable comments of its authors, promises to be a delightful walking companion. ■ *Keswick and Northern Lakeland* is available from Bookends, 56 Castle Street, Carlisle, and 66 Main Street, Keswick, and from www.bookscumbria.com.

How true!