

The Speet Gill Trail

*A circular
footpath with
three sections*

NW00020



This leaflet is one of a series produced by Solway Rural Initiative

The initiative offers a new mechanism for dealing with the problems of rural development and countryside management.

In consultation with all interested parties, Solway Rural Initiative manage the Solway Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

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Welcome to Speet Gill

The Vision

We will create and manage a circular trail for visitors and locals alike, with sections suitable for users of all ages and abilities, to enjoy the wildlife, beauty and historical interest Speet Gill has to offer.

The first section of the trail is by the Speet Beck. This part is now an 'Access for All' route with picnic benches, resting perches, a locally carved seat and waymarker posts.

1 The beck trail begins near the site of an old water powered corn mill, Little Mill. No one knows exactly where it was, but evidence shows it may have been close to where the start of the trail begins on your right. The lord of the manor had sole right to own watermills and wind mills, and each miller had to look after an animal owned



by the lord. Little Mill had to feed the boar with some of the grain that was ground, and the miller in turn charged a toll for grinding villagers' grain. From here continue along the beck trail until you come to a gnarled oak on the beck side with a fence going into the trunk.

Route Information

Public Transport: There are bus services to Wigton from Carlisle, Workington, Cockermouth, Keswick, Aspatria. For details of times, phone 0870 6082608

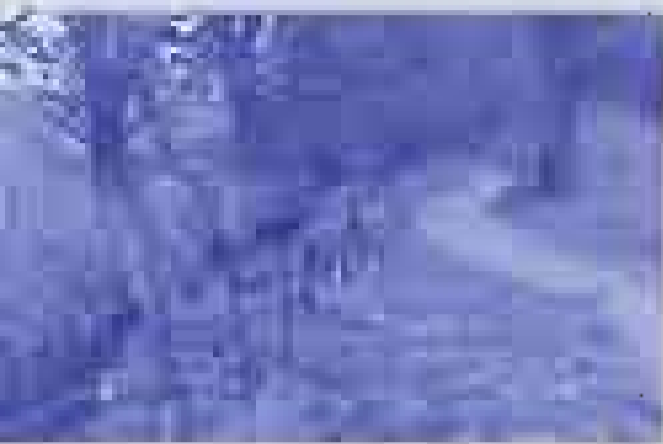
LOCATION

Park at the Water Street car park, and walk down the path towards the Baths, or take the turning signposted 'Swimming Pool' in Wigton town centre on the B596 just next to the 'Black- A -Moor' Hotel, and follow the narrow road, turning left, with the river beside it, towards the Baths car park, situated to the right of the bridge over the Speet Beck. Here you can park your car and then find the start of the trail at the bridge, which is about 20metres from the parking area. The trail surface is compacted quarry stone, in parts suitable for wheel chairs and push chairs. Total trail length about 1 Km.

*Please
follow the
Country Code*



The story of Speet Gill Trail started as an idea from a local councillor, who approached Solway Rural Initiative to manage the project on behalf of Wigton Town Council. Grants from Local Heritage Initiative (a partnership of the Lottery Heritage Fund, Nationwide Building Society and Countryside Agency), Cumbria Waste Management, Wigton Town Council, Hadfield Trust, Allerdale Arts, Cumbria Community Fund, together with the hard work from SRI's Environmental Task Force (New Deal), have helped us turn a dream into a reality which we can all enjoy.



2 The iron railings were part of the Highmoor Estate and were erected in the 1800's.

This means that this oak is over 200 years old, although some can live for up to 800 years! Oak trees also provide the habitat for over 250 types of insects; and wildlife, including red squirrels. Trees with holes make great nest sites for birds like tits, kestrels and little owls.

3 As you carry on the trail, notice brambles and hazel trees. These are havens for small animals, including field mice, voles and hedgehogs; birds such as blackbirds, chaffinches and thrushes; and butterflies such as Red Admiral and Tortoiseshell. The plants provide winter food and nesting areas for the birds. Hazel used to be coppiced (cut back) to produce wood for bobbins, charcoal; barrel and basket making.

4 Further along, you will see alder trees, with small green or purple cones, on the banks of the beck. Alder likes to grow beside rivers and have its roots in water, and so help to keep the river-bank stable. Locally, the alder was used to make clog soles, as the wood is very flexible, and provided warm footwear in winter.

5 Roughly half way along the beck trail, notice an old small weir made of sandstone. The far bank is also of old sandstone and is now clad in mosses and ferns. Perhaps this was a bridge, or a sluice for the Little Mill.

7 By the new bridge is a small picnic area where you may sit and listen to the birds singing and the beck flowing quietly along, or continue over the bridge onto the next section of the trail.



6 As you approach the bridge, high above in the birch trees, are galls which look like balls of messy twigs. Locally these are known as 'Witches Brooms' and are caused by fungi or bacteria, which make the wood grow out of control.

8 Kirkland Pines

This path is bordered by old Scots pines, Larch and Cedar, and rises to a superb view point of Wigton. It is thought that near the site of the Wigton Baths, on a bank known as Stoney Bank (derived from 'Stank Bank', meaning wet bank) stood a windmill in Medieval times. During very dry summers you may see

the area of the foundations where the windmill once stood.

9 Look out for the only remaining wind mill, now without its sails. It stands by the railway station and is known locally as "Sloan's Mill".

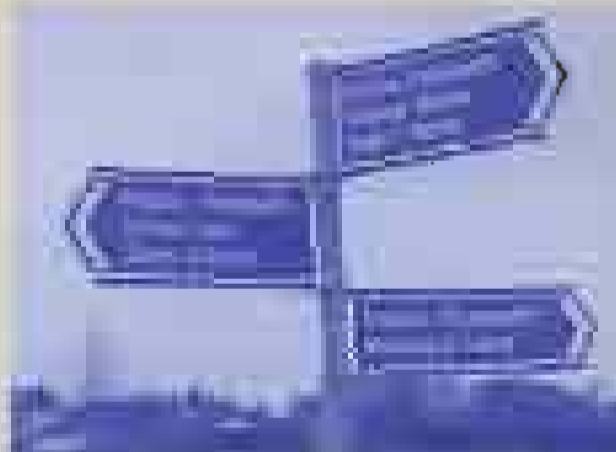
10 As you look over the fields towards Wigton, note the bumps on the field surfaces. These are the ridges and furrows of the Medieval strip fields.

Continue down the hill towards the small gate. This brings you to the final section of the trail.

11 Kirkland Lane. Turn towards Wigton, and follow the path to Stoney Bank Road.

Notice the iron fencing, again all part of the old Highmoor estate owned by the Banks family, the local squire, throughout the 1800's. Before this time, the fields were owned in common by local farmers.

Edwin Banks built Wigton Baths, which were opened in 1901, and his family lived in the large house with the tall tower, you can see from the main Carlisle to Cockermouth Road.



We hope you enjoyed the trail and will visit it in all seasons of the year.