

## Foreword

The summer of 1652 saw the gathering together of the Quaker movement and the formation of a coherent and cohesive new and true 'church' labelled variously 'Children of the Light', 'Friends of the Truth' or, in scorn, 'Quakers'. Founder George Fox had travelled north from his home county of Leicestershire and on Pendle Hill had a vision of a 'great people to be gathered.' He found this great people at the Whit Hiring Fair in Sedbergh and a few weeks later he reached Ulverston and the home of Thomas and Margaret Fell.

It was a dramatic time for these outlaw and outcast Christians. Fox's journey towards Ulverston is symbolic of the journey the movement made towards success and stability: the end point of a personal journey became the start of a collective one. Key to this success was Margaret Fell who became one of the highly significant early Quaker leaders and 'mother' to the movement.

Thanks to this book, we can now easily retrace the steps of those spiritual pioneers and begin to better understand the geography and social history of the land they were travelling through. Nothing beats walking to be truly on and in the land and alongside its past. Walking, we can have a sense of both past and present, of what was and of what is. We can be fully present to those we meet as well as reflect on all the markers of history we inevitably come across along the way.

The Friends Way allows us to engage with Quaker history and with wider non-conformity in the north-west of England, as well as savouring the rugged beauty of Westmorland. I hope you enjoy this lovely book, and also that you take up the wonderful, timeless invitation it offers to walk the path that led to the consolidation of early Quakerism.

*Ben Pink Dandelion*  
*Professor of Quaker Studies, University of Birmingham*

*South over Morecambe Bay,  
with Hoad Hill*

# 1 Planning

Our previous guidebook *Friends Way 1* covered a literal journey – George Fox's walk in northern England in 1652. By contrast, Margaret Fell's journey was metaphorical. As Thomas Fell's 18-year-old bride, she became mistress of Swarthmoor Hall and, later, mother to their eight surviving children. After her 'convincement' – her transforming conversion by Fox's visit in 1652 – she became a leader and organiser of Quakers.

Swarthmoor Hall, where she lived for 70 years, at first became the national headquarters of the movement, then, after the HQ moved to London, its main centre in the north. Swarthmoor hosted regular Meetings – including, from 1671, monthly Women's Meetings, of which Fell and her daughters were prominent leaders. She was an active Quaker for half a century, from 1652 until her death in 1702. Her personality, social position, education, courage and advocacy gave strength to the movement.

Margaret Fell's life and work place her firmly in the tradition of famous women who defied the social norms of their time to become leaders and influencers. For too long, Fell was not merely overshadowed by her famous second husband, she seemed almost invisible to Quaker historians – albeit recent scholars have redressed the balance somewhat. We devote this book to Margaret Fell's journey as a heartfelt tribute. For our short biography, see pages 16-20.

Some readers may already have read *Friends Way 1*, which covered part of George Fox's journey, and some may even have completed its itinerary. This walk is complementary to that journey, with the only overlap being the 9-mile Sedbergh Quaker Trail: see page 26. Readers coming new to *Friends Way* are advised to spend long enough in Sedbergh to complete that Trail. However both long walks can be completed in either order, ending at Sedbergh or starting there. We hope that this book, like its predecessor, will introduce some Quakers to long-distance walking and many long-distance walkers to Quakerism.

## A note on terminology

The official name of the Quaker movement is now the Religious Society of Friends. Although *Quaker* was originally coined as a pejorative term, it is nowadays (and throughout this book) often used interchangeably with *Friend*. In general, Quakers are more likely to refer to each other as Friends, whilst non-Quakers are more likely to use the term Quakers for clarity in speech – because *friends* and *Friends* sound the same.

*Swarthmoor Hall c. 1874 (engraving)*



# Best time of year and weather

Most people will plan to walk this Way in late spring, summer or early autumn. Birds are more active and visible during early spring and late autumn, and wildflowers are at their best in late spring and summer. June may feel especially appropriate given the timing of Margaret Fell's first encounter with George Fox and Quakerism in 1652. Accommodation will be more limited out of season, and post-pandemic it can be scarce and expensive at any time of year. Overall the best timing is likely to be anywhere from Easter to October. In theory, of course, you could walk the Way at any time of year. It is mostly low-level, never venturing above an altitude of 229 m (752 ft) – on the shoulder of Warth Hill: see page 42. Winter walking will always involve short hours of daylight, greater chance of wet, windy weather and sodden ground in the offroad sections. It's wise to keep checking on the weather forecast during your walk: see page 71.

However, if you live locally and can go at short notice on a good forecast, you could enjoy any section of it on a crisp winter day, as long as you make the most of the daylight. Unless you are familiar with high latitude (about 54° N) you may not realise how short the days can become, with fewer than eight hours of daylight in late December. It's easy to check on sunrise and sunset times ahead of time: see page 71.

## Which direction?

We describe the route generally westward from Sedbergh to Ulverston because we are following George Fox's journey – with some variations to take in facilities such as B&Bs. Reversing the direction would offer the advantage that on trend you'd be walking with the prevailing wind behind you. However we don't believe that this outweighs the role of Swarthmoor Hall as the fitting culmination of this walk. Our text instructions cover the westward direction only so, if reversing, you'd have to rely on our maps: it's harder than you may expect to follow directions 'in reverse'.

## How long will it take?

The overall distance including the Sedbergh Quaker Trail (SQT) is 58 miles/94 km, so much shorter than Friends Way 1, which is 71.4 miles including the SQT. The route is intended to be spread over six days, including a full day in Sedbergh for the SQT. However you can split the route differently to suit your fitness, travel arrangements and accommodation choices. The route is intended as a long and enjoyable walk, not as a test of endurance or speed. Read also page 10 for factors that will affect your average speed.

Distances are shown in Table 1, which has sections of notably unequal length. For example the distance from Crooklands to Kendal is only 8.3 miles (13.4 km) to allow time to explore Kendal: see page 49. And the Sedbergh Quaker Trail is only 9.4 miles, but there is so much Quaker heritage to see that it justifies an extra day in Sedbergh – at least for those who have not yet completed it.

Table 1

	miles	km
Quaker Trail	9.4	15.1
Sedbergh	13.4	21.6
Crooklands	8.3	13.4
Kendal	13.9	22.4
Newby Bridge	13.4	21.6
Swarthmoor Hall		
Total excluding SQT	49	79
Total including SQT	58	94

## Accommodation and refreshments

Many walkers seek a hot evening meal and a soft bed after a hard day's walking. With this in mind, we have split the route in the expectation that you will probably wish to overnight in each of Sedbergh, Crooklands, Kendal, Newby Bridge and Ulverston. Table 2 shows where you can find accommodation and refreshments, or at least where you could in 2023. The aftermath of the pandemic may mean that some options may have closed and may not reopen. Check carefully before making plans. As of 2023, the only relevant hostel was the independent Kendal Hostel ([kendalhostel.co.uk](http://kendalhostel.co.uk)).

Table 2 Facilities along the Way

	B&B, hotel	hostel	café, pub	shop	campsite
Sedbergh	✓		✓	✓	✓
Bramaskew Farm	✓				
Warth Hill					✓
Crooklands	✓			✓	✓
Kendal	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Underbarrow *			✓		
Crosthwaite	✓		✓		
Newby Bridge	✓		✓	✓	
Backbarrow	✓		✓		
Bouth	✓		✓		✓
Spark Bridge / Lowick Green			✓		
Ulverston	✓		✓	✓	✓
Swarthmoor Hall ❖❖			✓		

\* about 1 km offroute ❖❖ Due to reopen 2024: check website

Table 2 also shows where campsites are available. A tent that you carry is of course the ultimate low-cost accommodation, but camping along this route could be very challenging. Official campsites are sparse, and you would need to carry heavy loads to include sleeping equipment, cooking gear and food. Long-distance walking while doing self-supported camping demands considerable fitness and previous experience.

Refreshments are generally covered by the main overnight stops having at least one pub, café or take-away. If your dietary needs are specialist, or if you feel you need frequent snacks, carry your own supplies. However if you eat a hearty breakfast and a good evening meal you may need to carry little extra food. However, you should always carry plenty of drinking water for the day's walk, unless you rely on purifying tablets or filters.

Whitewater Hotel, Backbarrow





## Navigation, waymarking and experience

The mapping in Part 3 is detailed (scale 1:35,000) and closely linked with the route description. If you follow directions carefully, navigation should be straightforward. Distances are shown by mileage markers that are cumulative from St Andrew's Church, Sedbergh. Each page also carries a pale grey km grid and north is always straight up the page. The key to map symbols and colours is inside the back cover.

As of 2023 the Friends Way had no dedicated waymarking, and although there are plenty of footpath signs you need to stay alert for which ones you are meant to be following. We offer detailed advice about when to follow the Dales Way, the Lancaster Canal Trail and the Cumbria Way. The photos above/below give you some idea of the variety of signs to look out for. But you also need to be vigilant about when to stop following certain signs. On occasions you have to look for an obscure arrow or detect which gate or stile to aim at, or try to follow a trod path over open hillside that has not recently been trodden.

If you have never attempted a long-distance walk before, we encourage you to obtain and study our *Notes for novices*: see page 71. We suggest that you don't go alone, especially not in winter or when poor visibility means that map and compass skills may be needed. Having said that, if you take time to prepare and plan your expedition, this could be a very suitable choice for your first long walk, especially if you can go with another walker.

People vary in their ability to navigate and also in their preferred methods. We offer information about maps on page 71 and explain about the very detailed online mapping as well as the printed sheets. In addition we offer a GPX route file which you can use with a GPS device or smartphone with a suitable app: see page 71. Even if you are an expert GPX user, we advise you to carry a compass and paper mapping as backup, either using this guidebook or sheet maps at larger scale.

*North over Cartmel Sands to Canal Foot*





## Getting there and away



To reach Sedbergh, many people will use the nearest railway station – Oxenholme, 10 miles to the west. Woofs of Sedbergh operate a W1 bus from Oxenholme but currently only twice a day on weekdays, so a taxi would connect with trains much more flexibly. Oxenholme is on the west coast mainline and direct trains from London Euston take less than three hours (Avanti West Coast via Preston). To and from Glasgow Central, trains run via Carlisle and Penrith and can take as little as 2 hours with Avanti West Coast, slightly longer by Transpennine Express.

From Manchester, reach Oxenholme using the hourly train (Transpennine Express) for a fast and direct journey time of just 65-70 minutes. Northern Rail also has services, but they are less frequent, take a bit longer and you may have to change at Lancaster or Preston.

From Leeds, or anywhere on the scenic Settle/Carlisle line, trains run to the nearest station at Dent, from where limited bus services run into Sedbergh, so again a taxi would probably work out better.

To return from Ulverston you may find a train is fastest. There are trains to the West Coast mainline via Carnforth. Change for Lancaster to the south or go via Penrith and Carlisle to the north. If coming from afar, there is a train to Manchester airport. Alternatively, Stagecoach run an X6 bus service to Kendal (takes about an hour), from where Oxenholme is reached easily by taxi, on foot, or local bus service.

If you are seeking to complete this route in several trips, let alone as day-walks, be warned: rural public transport was both sparse and infrequent even before the pandemic and you would need to study the timetables carefully and check before relying on them.