
36 Glenridding

Theme: Climate and landscape change

Location

36 Glenridding alluvial fans. There is parking in the village. Walking to the top of Place Fell is a strenuous 7 kilometre return hike from Patterdale [NY 387 169].

Description

In December 2015 a reporter from a national TV station described the scene as floodwater, carrying rocks, boulders and silt, overwhelmed Glenridding. 'Unprecedented!' he declared. It was devastating, yes, but not unprecedented.

Like all mountainous areas the Lake District is an active landscape. It may look stable and peaceful but its steep slopes and narrow valleys means it is susceptible to extreme weather. Increases in heavy rainfall as our climate changes will inevitably have more impact. Geological maps can be used to identify where these events have taken place in the past. Look at the map of Ullswater: areas of sand and gravel ('alluvial fans') spread into the lake at the mouths of mountain streams. The village of Glenridding sits on one of these; the fan, now a grass-covered expanse of flood debris can be plainly seen from Place Fell opposite. These fans started to build as the glaciers began to recede 15,000 years ago and every large storm since has added to them. Such events are not unprecedented, merely beyond living memory and they will happen again.

Spreads of alluvium provide rare areas of flat, fertile ground and it is natural that humans have occupied them wherever they occur. The village of Buttermere sits on the alluvial fan produced by Mill Beck flowing down from Newlands Hause. The fan has reached to the other side of the valley and in doing so created two lakes, Buttermere and Crummock Water.

Living in a landscape that will become more active in a changing climate presents challenges. Investing in flood defence walls and dredging stream beds may be one answer. In other active landscapes, like the eroding coast of Norfolk, the scale of the challenge is greater and the inevitably unpalatable solution for some communities is not to defend but to adapt, and sometimes to recognise the unassailable force of nature, and retreat.

Photographs

(Photo 36-1) 36 View of Glenridding and the alluvial fan from Place Fell.

(Photo 36-2) 36 Glenridding.



(Photo 36-1) View of Glenridding and the alluvial fan from Place Fell.



(Photo 36-2) Glenridding.