
45 Wastwater

Theme: Climate and landscape change

Location

45 Wastwater — Screes. Easiest viewed from the road on the northwest side of Wastwater [NY 151 044].

Description

It is England's deepest lake and in 2021 the Royal Geographical Society named it as one of the seven natural wonders of Britain.

When you enter Wasdale and get your first glimpse of the lake it is hard not to be over-awed. Wastwater's long straight valley draws in your eye. In the distance are the mountains of Yewbarrow and Kirk Fell and bordering the southeast side of the lake are the most dramatic screes in Cumbria. The valley is almost five kilometres long and the bottom of the lake is 79 metres below its surface. The valley was scoured and over-deepened by glaciers. The last one retreated only about 15,000 years ago. But it is the screes that dominate the near view. Vast cones of angular rocks and boulders, at least 200 metres high, cascade down from rocky gullies and crags into the lake. The crags are 450-million-year-old Ordovician lavas. The debris (talus) of the screes is the same rock. The screes began to form fully as the glacier, which filled the valley, melted away and freezing and thawing shattered the bedrock. It is probable the valley sides also 'de-stressed' and slid away after billions of tons of glacial ice disappeared. The scree slopes are steep and you can pick out by the lack of vegetation where they continue to move through gravity and water flow, especially after periods of heavy rainfall.

You get a great view of the screes from the north-western shore of Wastwater, but if you are tempted to see them close up, please take care. In places the lakeside path is very difficult to follow and the huge boulders and gaps between them make the screes a dangerous place for the ill-prepared and a regular venue for the mountain rescue team.

Photographs

(Photo 45-1) 45 Wastwater and its screes from the northwest.

(Photo 45-2) 45 Wastwater.



(Photo 45-1) Wastwater and its screes from the northwest.



(Photo 45-2) Wastwater