
52 Loughrigg Fell

Theme: Heritage and mining

Location

52 Loughrigg — Wordsworth and Sedgwick. The summit is a 2.5 kilometre walk south and west from Rydal [NY 347 051].

Description

William Wordsworth and the poems inspired by his Cumbrian homeland are known the world over. That he influenced and was influenced by, geologists is much less well known.

One of those geologists was Adam Sedgwick, a vicar's son from Dent, (and so also a Cumbrian by today's geography!) who admitted to having no geological expertise, but was appointed as Woodwardian Professor of Geology at Cambridge University. Sedgwick spent several years in the Lake District correcting his geological deficit. His guide was Jonathan Otley, yet another Cumbrian, known to Wordsworth and an amateur geologist and clockmaker. Born in humble surroundings at Scroggs, near Loughrigg Tarn, he was a man whose knowledge of the area was encyclopaedic; he was the first to propose the basic three-fold division of Lake District rocks. While Otley remained a local hero, Sedgwick rose to be one of the foremost British geologists, who defined the Cambrian and Devonian periods of Earth's history. Sedgwick was deeply religious and that conflicted with a rapidly developing science. He once berated Darwin, a pupil of his, for the heresy of his theory of evolution.

Wordsworth and Sedgwick met and walked together many times, exchanging their respective literary and scientific views that could be landscape specific, or deeply philosophical. Much to Sedgwick's discomfort Wordsworth teased rock collectors in his poem, *The Excursion*. *'He who with pocket-hammer smites the edge; Of every luckless rock or prominent stone; Detaching by the stroke; A chip or splinter; To resolve his doubts; And, with that ready answer satisfied; The substance classes by some barbarous name: And thinks himself enriched; Wealthier, and doubtless wiser, than before!'* Walk over the glaciated volcanic rocks of Loughrigg Fell and you will be following in their footsteps. You can gaze across Langdale and Grasmere and admire the dramatic and ancient landscape that inspired them both.

Photographs

(Photo 52-1) 52 View west from Loughrigg Fell.

(Photo 52-2) 52 Loughrigg.



(Photo 52-1) View west from Loughrigg Fell.



(Photo 52-2) Loughrigg.