
27 Beldon Cleugh

Theme: Climate and landscape change

Location

Beldon Cleugh is a 5 kilometre hike west from Blanchland [NY 917 505].

Description

Beldon Burn flows east down from the Pennine hills. About 5 kilometres west of Blanchland it is joined from the north by a large, steep sided, valley which has no stream running in it. During the last Ice Age this channel was cut and used by torrents of glacial meltwater flowing under an ice sheet.

Geologists know it was cut by a river under pressure under the ice because it has a “humped profile” — its course goes up and over a col. Beldon Cleugh is even more remarkable than it looks because there are at least 9 metres of peat infilling its floor.

During the last glaciation, only 20,000 years ago, all of northern Britain was covered by a sheet of ice, up to a kilometre thick in places. Ice that thick completely changed the landscape and blocked normal valleys and drainage routes. Water beneath the ice cut new channels, often completely ignoring the pre-existing topography.

Bog vegetation on the peat infill consists mainly of heather and hare’s-tail cottongrass. Bracken grows on the steep sides. The surrounding heather moorland is managed for red grouse.

Photographs

(Photo 27-1) View south of the glacial meltwater channel at Beldon Cleugh.



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