

4.2 Crinkle Crag 8

Images from the walk to the waymarker tree.



The tiny dark green dot (at centre) is your objective. From here the waymarker yew appears inconsequential ... an impression that changes as you proceed and the tree becomes more visible.



Now in full view, below the cliffs of Great Gill Head Crag (the northern rocky ramparts of Hard Knott) the splendour of this lone fellside tree looms large.



The uphill walk, through deep bracken, brings you close enough to see the wind-shaped majesty of this isolated tree. The rough slopes of Heron Crag lie opposite, with Slight Side seen above. The skyline ahead features the Scafells plus the Bowfell-Crinkle Crag group – all encircling the head of the upper valley, looming over Green Crag and Throstlehow Crag at centre, divided by the infant Esk.



Beneath the low-spreading canopy the tree's true condition is seen, with a major central core of decay on the uphill side of the trunk. This dead centre relates to the crown area that's missing – and was once covered by live branches and foliage – seen in the upper-right of the tree's outline, if you review the image above.



The central column of decay; the aftermath of losing the tree's original leader, due to storm damage and/or lightning long ago. This volume of damage is traumatic, yet the yew has survived – still growing and attempting to occlude the wound.



The massive squat lower trunk is buttressed, braced, fissured, fractured and fused, as is characteristic of yew. It remains immensely strong. Both decay and occlusion continue at a slow rate, almost in balance. This ancient tree may still be alive in the next millennium – providing summer shade and winter refuge to the sheep who nonchalantly graze around it.