

Title:

Alien landings in the Lake District?

Word Count:

613

Summary:

News that the latest space probe has discovered a discarded Kendal Mint Cake wrapper on the surface of Mars, and, what appears to be an alien space-craft seen landing on Skiddaw and discharging small people armed with cameras, confirms once and for all that Cumbria and the Lake District is probably the most popular visitor location in the Universe.

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Article Body:

News that the latest space probe has discovered a discarded Kendal Mint Cake wrapper on the surface of Mars, and, what appears to be an alien space-craft seen landing on Skiddaw and discharging small people armed with cameras, confirms once and for all that Cumbria and the Lake District is probably the most popular visitor location in the Universe.

Not only is the spectacular scenery and hospitality a tourist attraction, but an added allure is the sense of mystery, secrecy and maybe a touch of disbelief surrounding many of the region's venues.

A century or so ago, travelers wishing to cross Lake Windermere between Ferry Nab and Sawrey on the opposite shore used the services of a boatman and his small rowing-boat. One particularly stormy night, a voice was heard to call for transport from the wooded slopes of Claiffe Heights on the Sawrey side of the water. The boatman duly set off to collect what he assumed was a passenger, but, disappeared en-route. Later on the following day, the boatman was found laying on the lake shore, incoherent and in deep shock. He died shortly afterwards. Thus was established the legend of the "Crier of Claiffe".

Moving a few miles south to the village of Natland, near Kendal, the visitor is faced by the sticky problem of unraveling the riddle of the Treacle Mines whose exact location, has, over the centuries, remained a closely guarded secret known

only to a few of the village elders.

Sadly, researchers can no longer enlist the assistance of the notable, but long dead Scots born wizard, Michael Scott. Scott is credited with casting a spell on a coven of witches and turning them into the stones which now constitute the circle of "Long Meg" near Penrith. Folklore states that if a visitor can count the number of stones twice, and arrive at the same total each time, then the spell will be broken. However, be warned; any attempt to dislodge the stones will invoke a weather storm of cataclysmic power.

This area is rich in Arthurian Legend. One account recounts the episode where Arthur and his nephew joined forces to outwit the scheming Grim Baron. Their quest, set by the Baron, to search the true answer to the question "what does a woman desire" makes entertaining reading. And, what of the mystery of the Giants Grave found in the churchyard of Penrith's St. Andrews Church?

Leaving Penrith behind and continuing north to the region's capital, Carlisle, we find the "Cursing Stone" standing in the entrance of a pedestrian underpass not too far from the ancient castle. This 14 tons of recently sculpted stone bears the 1069 words of a 16thC curse chiseled into the surface. The curse concludes by condemning the marauding Border Reivers of the age to "the deep pit of Hell". Recently, there have been calls for the stone's removal from the city by some who believe that its presence brings ill-fortune.

On a lighter note, a visit to the beautiful but uncompromising stretch of Wastwater may reveal the position of the underwater gnome garden. This is an area where, with a little imagination, the inspiring setting will transport you on any journey of your choice to a world of magic and mystery. These are but a few of the many tales, fanciful or otherwise, which have enchanted generations over the centuries. There is nothing to compare (in my opinion) to a good yarn told over a drink in a log-fired pub amongst friends, old and new.

Incidentally, did I really see a 3 legged dog, wearing a life-jacket on the shores of Lake Windermere one morning, and was it wearing a space-helmet?