

## My beach at Silecroft is wild and beautiful. There are golden sands as far as the eye can see and amazing creatures hiding in the rock pools.

Natterjack toads sing to me in the springtime, swallows tell me tales of their trips to Africa and gannets show me how to dive for fish. I still prefer eating mussels and cockles though!

But there is another side to Silecroft and its neighbouring village of Kirksanton. A mysterious and ancient side from long ago when stone circles rose from the ground under the shadow of Black Combe and giants roamed the land. This really is the magical place where mountains meet the sea.

Let me tell you some tales from the baffling beasts at the ocean's edge to the ancient stones on the wild, windy fells. Let's see if you can spot any captivating clues from our past and solve some unspoken mysteries from times gone by...



## The Kirksanton Giant

There has always been lots of talk in Cumbria about giants who once roamed the land and it might be just here where one of them is buried. Two very ancient and very tall standing stones, possibly 4,000 years old, stand proud on the coastal plain. Travellers have spoken of strange white orbs of light that can be seen floating mysteriously above them after dark!

Last winter solstice, on the shortest day of the year I was resting on top of the giant stones. Suddenly the rising moon shone brightly in my eyes and I imagined a glistening lake between me and the sea. I heard a grumbling, rumbling sound from deep within the ground and I am certain the ghost of a giant rose from the earth and walked towards the lake. He threw something into the shimmering water

then stomped up to the 'Giant's chair' on the fellside. I couldn't believe my eyes... maybe I will try it again this year! I've heard that tall pointed standing stones like these are linked to the moonrise and moonset at certain times of the year. It's great to have such magical moonstones on my doorstep.

If you look carefully you might spot cup marks (rock art) on the stones, showing how important they were. Cup and ring marks are often found at very special prehistoric sites. Maybe this place was an entrance way to the sacred places on the fell above called Laca Bank? Some folks say that the hollow in the ground by the stones is where a chapel was swallowed up by evil forces! Why do you think the stones are here?



## Rocky Pools and Baffling Beasts

The sun is setting, the sea is calm and beneath your feet a rock pool glimmers. Little creatures zoom from shells to seaweed, and goggle eyes look up at you wondering... In the dusky glow you can spot luminescent flashes and creatures changing shape. This is the side of a rock pool that is very rarely seen. Let's look into the waters and see if you can solve these revolting riddles...

*I love eating rotten seaweed and dead mussels that really stink  
I zoom about with lightning speed and you'll miss me if you blink  
I'm bioluminescent, with score legs, three claws and goggle eyes  
I like to sneak up on the fishies and give them a cheeky surprise  
I use my antennae to feel for food and am great at keeping water fresh  
I can give birth to eighty babies who'll use this pool as a salty creche.*

I am a common prawn

*I have spiny skin all over me and five long arms that really wriggle  
I feel funny when I'm on your hand and can make you really giggle  
I love to eat mussels, chunky clams, sometimes a poopy snack  
If I get in a fight and lose a limb I can be amazing and grow it back!  
I'm a pinky orange colour, very strong and my stomach's in my middle  
I prise open shells, turn my tummy inside out and digest prey in a diddle.*

I am a starfish

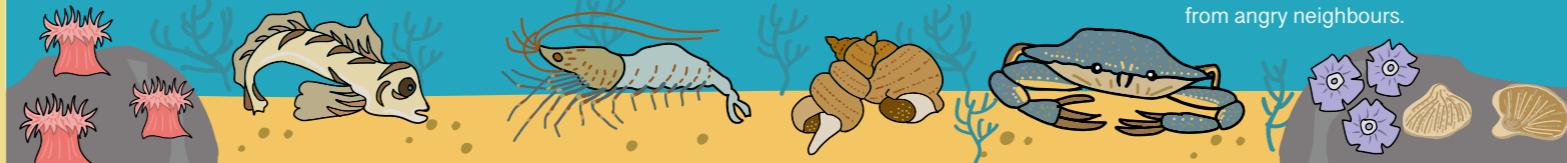
*I am sometimes called 'The Fighter' and have two bright red eyes  
My skeleton's on the outside and my legs hide a tattoo disguise  
I'm covered in velvety hairs and my blue claws help me to feed  
My legs are shaped liked paddles, I propel through water with speed  
At night I hunt for hermit crabs, snack on little fish and worms  
I'm a very feisty fella who can nip you and make you squirm.*

I am a velvet swimming crab

*Some say I'm like a ball of jelly or a marble very clear  
My feathery combs flap around to help me move and steer  
My tentacles trail behind me, two fishing lines with hooks  
I'm very colourful at night, come find me and take a look  
My bright coloured cells glow in the dark but please worry not  
Luckily I'm not a jelly stinger, I just use my sticky snout.*

I am a sea gooseberry

Also look out for sea urchins, whelks, periwinkles and limpets who cling to the rocks. There are also little fish living here called shanny. They are very camouflaged and quite shy, so you will have to look very carefully. They have large heads and big eyes and like to hide under the seaweed. Shanny can leap in and out of the water and are sometimes called sea frogs... watch out too as they can give you a nasty nip! If you spot a red blob of jelly it might be a beadlet anemone. As the tide rolls in, they unfurl little tentacles that can sting their prey and defend themselves from angry neighbours.



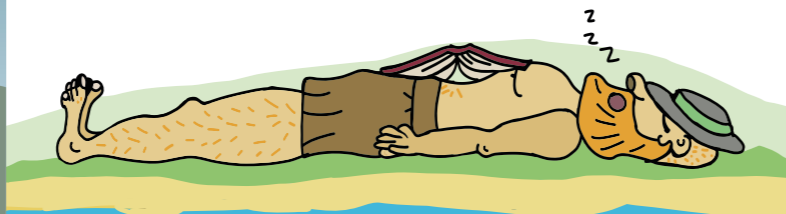
Do you have legs like a hardy Herdwick sheep? If the answer is yes, you can fly up the fell for 1km and see some amazing sites. Laca Bank overlooks the sea and the view is amazing; there are mysterious stone circles, spooky burial cairns and an ancient stone avenue, hidden on the hillside. Sacred springs bubble out of the ground and an eerie deserted farmhouse is at the centre of it all!

The word 'leikr' is an Old Norse word for sport, play, game or contest. The flat area of ground near the old farmhouse certainly seems like a great spot for some Viking games.

Perhaps a great battle was once fought there? Maybe that's why the people left... they couldn't stand the noisy ghostly neighbours!

**Black Combe fell looks amazing from here too. It is also known as the 'Sleeping Giant'. When I look towards the majestic hills from the Giant's Grave, they look like a lady lying on her back, her arms resting at her sides. If you have a good imagination like me you might also be able to spot the human face on the side of the smaller standing stone too.**

Can you see 'Kirksanton Moss' on your map? In the Bronze Age it was probably a beautiful lake. Stone circles and prehistoric burial sites are very often near lakes, marshes and springs. You'd better watch out for Jenny Greenteeth!



## All about oystercatchers

I can't be telling you all about the folklore of my home and not tell you a bit about me! My Gaelic name is 'Gille brighde' which means servant of the bride... the bride being Saint Brigid. She is linked to an ancient Celtic goddess whose festival is celebrated at 'Imbolc' on 1st February. Imbolc celebrates the return of the light after dark winter days. We got our name when my ancestors helped to hide Saint Brigid from some shifty fellas who were chasing her. We covered her from head to toe in slimy seaweed!

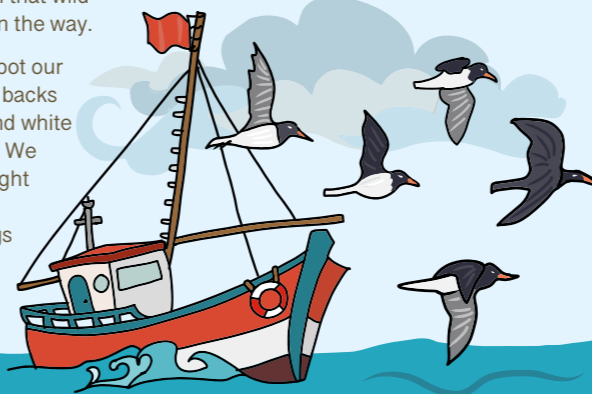
You might spot large flocks of us along the coast, especially when rough weather is coming. We help guide the local fishermen home when Saint Brigid sends us out to warn them that wild storms are on the way.

It's easy to spot our black heads, backs and wings and white underbellies. We also have bright red bills and pinky-red legs and move across

the beach looking for limpets; we use our powerful beaks to prise open the shells. After Valentine's Day you might spot us flying up the rivers inland looking for a mate. We always pair and make nests in the spring.

If you ever spot a beautiful speckled green egg (which I think are the prettiest in all of Cumbria) it might be one of my babies. We often lay them in little rocky hollows and on drystone walls. Please admire them but leave them alone as we have probably just popped out for some lunch.

**Listen for our 'peep peep' calls as we dance over the waves... Happy exploring and I hope you manage to solve some mysteries today!**



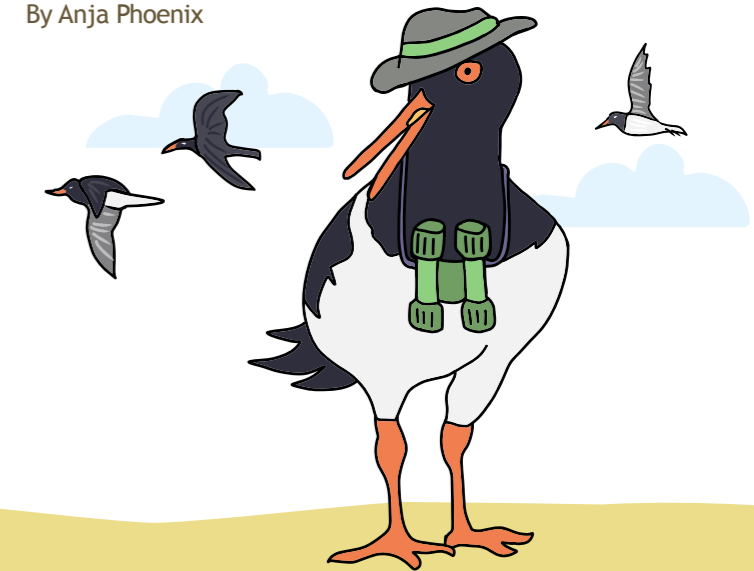
## fun local story walks

for children and the young at heart

## The Oystercatcher's Tale

A story walk from Silecroft

By Anja Phoenix



Easy to follow Map & Story

Explore, spot things & search for clues on the way



The bit for grown ups....

Silecroft beach is within the Lake District National Park. There are 5km of golden sand here to explore and often you will have it all to yourselves. These two walk or can be joined to make a longer walk or completed separately.

**Route Length**  
Silecroft can be reached off the main A5093 road, 3 miles north of Millom. Turn off the A595 and onto the A5093, after 300m turn right and continue through Silecroft village down to the shore. Nearest post code is LA18 4NY. There is a railway station in Silecroft which is on the Cumbria Coast Line.

**Refreshments**  
There is a wonderful new beach cafe (opening soon) in the car park right by the either head to Kirksanton and up onto Laca Fell or head back to the beach past Layrags, creating a 5.5km route.

**Extra explorations**  
If you fancy exploring the area on Kirksanton village up to the prehistoric remains on Laca Bank.

**Trail Safety Information**  
The terrain is a mixture of sandy/pebbly beach, grassy footpaths, gravel tracks and Footgolf is a fun game for all the family. Visit the golf club just 500m south of the car park. Visit [www.silecroftgolfclub.co.uk](http://www.silecroftgolfclub.co.uk)

This trail is five of six developed with Copeland Borough Council and The Outdoor Partnership as part of the Connecting Cumbria's Hidden Coast programme.

Published by Tale Trails  
[www.taletrails.co.uk](http://www.taletrails.co.uk)  
Illustrations and design by Custard Graphic Design  
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