

# Einar Stevens: Tales of Two Islands: Voyage to Blakeholme

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Of all the places associated with Arthur Ransome that we have visited, Blakeholme is for us the most special. As we passed Blake Holme Nab on our short sail north from Fell Foot Park at the base of Lake Windermere, the breeze increased a little, and our little sailing dinghy Titmouse hurried across the bay. On this trip she carried me and my daughter Hannah, aged 9. It was a fine June morning and the breeze, blowing from SSW had pushed us steadily along, close to the eastern shore. The island of Blakeholme lay beyond a cluster of moored boats on the far side of the bay.

We were making for the island's landing place in the narrow channel which separates it from the shore. AR, in a letter to a friend, advised on giving 'good clearance to the submerged rocks at the south end', and suggested coming round it 'up the inside passage from the south'. We followed his instructions, lowering the mainsail to reduce speed, as the prospect of running before the wind into a confined space with unmarked rocks was out of the question. I had no desire to find my own Pike Rock. The jib was lowered as we passed through the moored yachts and we proceeded under bare poles, oars at the ready to fend off rocks.

After negotiating the last moored yacht, we made for the centre of the channel and passed very close to one of the rocks AR had warned his friend about. The channel began to shoal, and soon we were raising the centreboard, leaving only a few inches down to assist steerage. Trees crowd each side of the channel and overhang the landing place with its small gravel beach. When nearly level with the landing place, we turned in, but before reaching the shore, I had to step overboard into about eight inches of water and manhandle Titmouse through the overhanging boughs. Care needs to be taken to avoid several large rocks lying either side of the landing place.

We were the only people to disturb the peace of Blakeholme that morning. As the breeze rustled the leaves overhead, we stood around the ashes of a recent fire at what must have been the campsite.

*'Natives', said Titty.*

*'Perhaps they are still here', said Roger*

Our picnic over and exploring done, we climbed aboard Titmouse and pushed off, letting the wind gently take us to the northern end of the channel and into the bay beyond. The water here was so shallow that I thought we would ground. Once in deeper water we raised the sails, passing a large submerged rock off the northern shore of the island. The last obstacle before regaining the open waters of Windermere was a long reef of rock extending from the northernmost point of Blakeholme. We looked back and silently bade the island, once more uninhabited, farewell.

**USEFUL INFORMATION** Fell Foot Park: Launching of small non-powered craft is possible from this National Trust site, and costs £3.50 a day (£21 a week). This includes parking for car and trailer. Tel: Newby Bridge (05395) 31273  
Windermere Lake Chart: This is a most useful map for people navigating on the lake. It is available from the Tourist Information Office in Rio.