

Crosthwaite and Lyth is a rural parish in the Westmorland and Furness district of south Cumbria extending to some 3,248 hectares. It is a sparsely populated area - the 2021 Census recorded a parish population of 700 (rounded to the nearest 10) with a significantly higher proportion of residents in older age groups than the average for England and Wales. The main settlement at Crosthwaite lies 5 miles west of Kendal, 5 miles north of Grange-over-Sands and 3 miles south of Bowness-on-Windermere.

The entire parish lies within the boundary of the Lake District National Park and exhibits a distinctive and scenic South Lakeland character. The landscape in the north and central part of the Parish comprises low hills and small-scale rocky outcrops within a patchwork of pastoral fields. These are punctuated by pockets of woodland and plantations and crossed by narrow lanes which connect the village to outlying hamlets and scattered farms. Hedges and stone walls line the roads and there are views towards the higher Lakeland fells in the north and Morecambe Bay to the south.

The eastern side of the Parish includes part of the Lyth Valley, which lies between the limestone escarpments of Whitbarrow Scar to the west and Scout Scar to the east. Whitbarrow, with the prominent cliffs of White Scar at its southern end, is a substantial limestone outcrop and forms the dominant feature in the landscape along the western side of the parish.

Much of the Lyth Valley is the flood plain of the River Gilpin which flows south to join the River Kent at the southern boundary of the Parish. Here the landscape character is low-lying, with pasture, wetland and areas of woodland which give way to estuarine habitats as the River Gilpin meets the tidal River Kent. In places the land is only a few feet above sea level and in times past this wet ground encouraged the development of large areas of bog (mosses) which in turn gave rise to extensive peat beds. These provided an important source of fuel for the local population. Following drainage programmes from the early 19th to the mid-20th centuries the agricultural value of the mosses was considerably enhanced allowing crops to be grown on the valley floor and providing good grazing for livestock.

The farmsteads fringing the Lyth Valley and similarly in the neighbouring Winster Valley have an historic and renowned association with damson production. The Westmorland damson is the smallest but most flavoursome variety of damson and is grown mainly in these two valleys. Damson orchards in the Lyth and Winster are unique, surrounding many active and redundant farmsteads and growing along many hedgerows in the valleys. Blossom time in April is a key seasonal feature of the area.