



**National
Trust**

Fanny Mercer

The characters of Buttermere

Fanny Mercer

The white cross on the side of Fleetwith Pike and overlooking Buttermere marks the sad story of Fanny Mercer. Fanny was a young servant girl who worked for Mr. Bowden Smith, a school teacher from Rugby, and accompanied his family on their summer vacation in the Lakes.

One fateful day in September 1887, the party were walking to the top of the crag above Honister Quarries and were descending down the steep ridge of Fleetwith Pike. Fanny was not an accomplished walker and during this part of the journey she jumped down from a ledge and lost her balance. She fell a distance of around twenty feet amongst rocks and rubble until she reached the bottom of the fell side. By the time the others had reached her, she was badly injured and taken to the nearby Gatesgarth Farm, but sadly died before medical assistance could arrive.

Her body was returned to Rugby where she was buried and the white cross erected in her memory in Buttermere. To this day the symbol stands as a warning to walkers that the mountains of the Lake District can be perilous unless you are alert and mindful of the dangers.