

Carham Parish Footpaths Group - Report 3rd February 2021

Here is my report and update on the rights of way followed in our walk of Saturday 10th November 2018. Please refer to the original report, which is found on the 'Walks' section of the Carham Parish website www.carhamparish.org (About > Walks). As well as providing an update of the condition of the paths and any improvements made, I hope that these reports encourage everyone to walk the paths and enjoy them! The more they are used the more accessible they remain.

Bridleway (Piperdean Lane) from B6352 at NT 853345 to Pressen Road



This 1¾ mile track undulates north/south over rolling landscape; a semi-wild strip contrasting with the rigorously managed arable farmland on either side, and at its highest points there are good views over the surrounding countryside. Its boundaries are made up of dry-stone walls, a small area of woodland and cut and uncut hedges. These boundaries, along with untamed vegetation along the route, provide habitats for birds and other wildlife.

I have been walking the route during the autumn and winter - in the summer months an impenetrable barrier of vegetation, especially at the northern end, makes the bridleway virtually unwalkable - but from the end of October through to April it is relatively passable after the vigorous overgrowth has died down. Farm and game vehicle tracks have kept the southern end relatively clear; gorse blocking the path has been cut back. It is a bridleway, and there is evidence of use by horses/riders. Hedge-cutting on the western side (done biennially) helps make the northern end more accessible, at least after cutting. There are several boggy patches along the way, and where the track dips down and crosses an overgrown (and possibly blocked) drain, it is quite badly flooded. In this area there are still deep wheel-ruts, but most of the surface of the middle of the track has a fairly even green sward covering the whole distance!



I have also appreciated seeing the wildlife during my walks, such as hares and roe deer – you can spot them grazing in the fields; I disturbed a woodcock in the wood, and set up a snipe in the boggy section. On a walk in the snow there were lots of animal tracks – badgers (see photo) hares, rabbits and foxes – I saw a fox in the middle of a snowy field curled up like a dog in the pale sun. The eastern side of the track is sparsely lined with untrimmed thorn and crab-apple trees – some of which are quite old. These are massed with berries and fruit in the Autumn, providing food for birds such as blackbirds and thrushes, and redwing and fieldfare from Scandinavia; in Spring the hedge is full of warblers from Africa. (It would be good to see this hedge replenished with new saplings to fill in the gaps.)

Byway and Footpath from Pressen Farm NT 836358 to Piperdean Lane

The byway and track are well-surfaced and maintained, but at a fork (839354) a sign to mark the turn to the right would be useful.



Which way?

At the end of this track, a wicket gate on the right allows entry through the hedge into a sloping field - the way is sometimes 'blocked' by a strand of barbed wire on the other side of the gate. Turning left and following the hedge line, to reach the small 'duck pond' at 845352 (I have sometimes disturbed waders such as common sandpipers here) two new (2019) stiles have been erected, directing the walker the correct way to the west of the pond.



Ahead up a steep hill, a gate and stile lead to a grass track to the left (there are good views of the surrounding hills from here) and over a stile into the wood; the path through the wood needs to be checked occasionally to keep it clear from branches obstructing the path.

Footpath from Pressen Road at NT 837361 to Sunilaws

This remains a difficult path. The walker has to make their way the best way they can. In theory, the right of way from the end of the track leading from the Pressen road to the field starts on the western side of the hedge, then changes to the eastern side (there is a fence here) and back again further on through a gate to the west side, but in practice this is no longer possible. There is a choice between the correct west side of the hedge, where the field is ploughed almost right up to the hedge, or the east side, where there is a wider rough grass margin, but this is no easier. The common practice of ploughing as close to the hedge as possible leaving a narrow and rough grass margin difficult to negotiate does not encourage walkers! At the gate further on, the easiest route continues on the east side, through an area of game cover. This leads to a clear track which finishes at a road junction – straight ahead to Sunilaws.

N.B.

Although the hope is to achieve walkable, fairly level paths on tracks and field margins, there should be enough room to leave longer grass and vegetation on either side of the path for wildlife!

All the above Rights of Way can be accessed from Pressen Farm. For car parking, there is a large area on the south side of the road against the farm shed wall. Please obtain permission from the farm to park here.

Stop Press:-

There are moves afoot to form a band of volunteers to carry out clearance and maintenance work on our paths – please let me know if you are interested, or you know of anyone who can help with this!