

Carham Parish Footpaths Walk Report, 25th February 2023



Area of Walk

Occasional drizzle threatened, but thankfully it stayed dry for our walk, a circular of (just over) three and a half miles starting from Cornhill Village Hall. Fourteen of us, plus two dogs, set off past the roundabout on the A697 to meet the old railway line running south on a raised embankment. Since it was made an official right of way in 2000, the footpath has become a valuable local asset, and is well-used and maintained.



A bridge over the railway line
(photo V Poland)

After a few hundred yards we took the left fork to East Learmouth - the right fork goes on towards West Learmouth. Further on we followed the path through a mixture of trees - sometimes rather too closely planted, where piles of discarded plastic tree guards remained. After passing under the

second of the railway bridges carrying farm tracks, and into open countryside, we had a good view of Campfield Bog, or Campfield Kettle hole, an area of marshy land covering more than two acres stretching between the two railway lines. This is registered as a Site of Special Scientific Interest – it is a marshy area and peat bog with a variety of plants, including trees such as birch and Scots pine, sphagnum mosses, cotton grass and other grasses, with willow, flag iris and water plantain on the more flooded parts. It is monitored by Natural England to record its condition – now listed as ‘unfavourable/recovering’.



We descended by the abutments and crossed the C21 road, which runs back out to the A697, to continue south along the short section of line between here and the C23 road going towards Branxton.

Permission had been given by the landowner at East Learmouth, and a gate had recently been erected next to the embankment, making it easier to access.

This section is not marked as a right of way (though confusingly it shows up as such on Ordnance Survey 1:50 scale maps). We previously walked this in March 2019 (see report on the Carham Parish website) and as I said then it would make sense to make it an official footpath – especially as there is an existing RoW at either end.

Some of the stone from the (sadly) dismantled abutments at the C23 road could be seen in old potato crates along the route, the rest still covers an area at the start of the footpath to Tithe Hill, and are now covered by branches and vegetation. A ladder stile is just about visible in the undergrowth, and the finger post is missing.

Turning right past East Learmouth Farm we made a 'dog leg' to the road following Duddo Burn and under the viaduct carrying the Cornhill to Kelso branch of the railway.

Arum lily and snowdrops by the Duddo Burn



Walkers by the viaduct

We then turned off the road onto the footpath which runs between the Duddo and Tree Burns and through a plantation of poplars. This path is much more easily accessible now that the landowners, West Learmouth Farm, clear the path right to the footbridge over Tree Burn, which used to get really overgrown. I wanted to draw attention to this path, as some walkers are not aware of it. (Some of our number admitted as much!)



By the footbridge over Tree Burn

On the other side of the bridge, we followed a meandering path that walkers had made through the crops planted by West Learmouth as part of a regenerative cropping scheme – indicating signs of use on the old permissive path running on this side of Tree Burn. A waymark sign is needed on the footbridge -

this would direct walkers to the 'correct' footpath. There is no obvious path round the edge of the field to meet the road back to Cornhill.

It was not easy with a large group to negotiate the two blind bends on the road up to the village, but we all got back safely after an enjoyable walk!