

Carham Parish Footpath Walks Report February 17th, 2024

This report highlights difficulties encountered on these footpaths and items (fingerposts etc) needing attention.

It was gratifying to see good numbers on our walk – 16 of us, including some new participants. This walk followed the route we did in April 2022, and in part in November 2018. (See <https://carhamparish.org/walks/> under 'Pressen and Piperdean Lane Circular'.



The good track from Pressen Farm ends in a 'cul-de-sac' where sheep congregate round a water trough; after the recent wet weather the whole area has become a deep quagmire of sheep dung and mud right in the way of the footpath gate into the next field! We circumvented this by climbing a steep hill and over a low fence from which the farmer kindly removed barbed wire.

B&W photo, Mick Plunkett – our alternative route!

Some of us also avoided the wet and boggy area on the right side of the 'duck pond' by passing round it to the left. We enjoyed the view over the Cheviots from the top of the steep hill up from the pond, but the path through the 'game-shelter' wood before reaching Piperdean Lane was still blocked by fallen trees, and the fingerpost was broken.





Some of the walkers on Piperdean Lane

Turning left up the 'Lonnen', access along the track is relatively clear apart from areas where gorse is encroaching, and on the rutted and boggy section on the 'S' bend at the bottom where the drain crosses*. The way seems to have improved lately, and looked as though it had been cut? The increasingly depleted hawthorn bushes on the sides of the track are useful to many birds - redwing and fieldfare in the autumn and winter, yellowhammer, tree sparrow and chaffinch etc.

Reaching the road at the end of the track we turned right along the lane (the hedge on the right shows evidence of past hedge-laying)

through a gate on the left and along field margins, passing Willow Burn, through a field called 'Brough Law' (where I had seen an abundance of skylarks) and out to the road, then left towards Sunilaws.



The fingerpost at the start of the footpath to Pressen is broken, and as before we followed the easier track on the left side of the hedge rather than the 'correct' route on the right. Past an area of game-cover (mixed flocks of birds can be seen here, enjoying the seeds!) to a gate; here we decided to go straight on along the left side of the hedge as both sides are much the same with a very narrow and uneven grass margin – it was difficult to avoid walking on the crop in places. At the end of the last field on a good track we passed stacks of timber felled from the nearby plantation to the road, and back up the hill to Pressen Farm.

Thank you to all those that attended to make it an enjoyable and sociable walk! Also, to the farmers at Pressen Farm for allowing us to use space for parking, and to West Learmouth Farm for access through their fields.

*The Flodden Rideout, part of the Scottish Borders Common Ridings, have a historically used the 'Lonnen' as part of the route, which changes according to availability and conditions. They have always had a problem with this section and have avoided it by going to the round to the east and meeting the track further on. They have suggested re-surfacing this area in some way to improve access!