

'By Railway and Byway' Carham Parish Footpath Walks 15th June 2024

Our walk planned to follow the route of the previous 'By Railway and Byway' walk of 18th September 2021 (Walk 1). As part of the byway to and from Wark has become extremely overgrown and impassable, the route was changed to avoid this section, and started from Cornhill instead of Wark. Please refer to our walks page on the website - <https://carhamparish.org/walks/> See also the walk of 25th February 2023 (Walk 11), which also covers some of the route; both highlight the ongoing problems and difficulties encountered on our footpaths and byways, and mention items and places of interest along the way.

The first footpath we followed, from the Wark road on the west side of Duddo Burn to the footbridge, was clear this time as the farmer had cut and recently re-sown the crop, but access is difficult for most of the year. I have never seen this path clearly marked on the ground – when the crops are high and large-leaved vegetation covers the ground round the edge of the field, it is impassable – walkers find their own way as best they can; some try to access the old permissive route still shown in the Scottish Borders Council booklet 'Walks Around Coldstream and Cornhill'



On the other side of the bridge over the burn the path through the poplar plantation had been cut by the farmer and was more readily accessible. Most of the footpaths on our route from here were relatively passable, though some of them passed through areas of longish grass (for example the path through recently planted trees.



The overgrown section of the byway – Access to our Rights of way can be difficult at this time of year; many of them are overgrown. We should be able to walk these paths all year round.

From the potato sheds we turned left along the road under the viaduct to the byway at West Learmouth. Where the byway crosses the railway, we turned left to follow the line west and into the field to the bottom, walking parallel to the very overgrown section to join the byway, which crosses the field back to meet the railway.

This field has now been fenced for livestock; there are two field gates, both of which are on the byway. Both gates need signs to show that it is a right of way. Looking over the gate into the overgrown part of the byway we were pleased to have gained permission from West Learmouth Farm to access this route rather than plough through chest-high vegetation!



Gates needing waymark signs

The 10 participants on our walk particularly enjoyed the paths along the railway, which is very attractive this time of year with flowering plants such as wild roses, red campion and sweet rocket; and with butterflies – ringlet, speckled wood and wood carpet moth. All the way we were accompanied by the songs of warblers – blackcap, willow-warbler, chiff-chaff and whitethroat.



Photo, Mick Plunkett

It was a very pleasant and sociable walk, enjoyed by all – some of us rounded it off with a brief sojourn in the Collingwood Arms in Cornhill!