

Carham Parish Footpaths Walk on Saturday 10th November 2018



It was a clear, sunny morning when 9 of us (the numbers boosted by members of the Four Border Abbeys Walking Group) set out from Pressen Farm to review 3 of the rights of way in our parish.

From the farm the track was clear and well-maintained, but additional way-markers would be useful where other tracks join the path. To the east of the track is Piper Dean, where, according to some sources, a battle was fought in 1436 between the 2nd Earl of Northumberland and the 2nd Earl of Angus (the Scots won) – but other sources place the battle site near Cockburnspath.

We passed through a wicket gate in the hedge where barbed wire, blocking the way, had been removed (possibly only temporarily) to an odd 'duck pond' area where we managed to shift the heavy metal, tied and unhinged, gate, plus a hurdle gate, to pass through. The official footpath a few yards to the west had a new barbed wire fence blocking the route.

From this low-lying area we made our way up the hill to the south-facing ridge, where there were fine views of the Cheviot Hills. A path through the wood was rather undefined, but easier

to traverse since I had cleared it earlier. It was suggested that a waymark post could be added in the wood, as one could take the game track by mistake. This path comes out onto Piperdean Lane, where we turned south to meet the Cornhill to Yetholm road, and to admire the newly erected 'Public Bridleway' sign!

This lane is a remnant of an old drove road, which can be seen on c1820-30 maps as a road continuing to Wark, but after 1860 the section north of the Pressen road seems to disappear - but its route is still marked by hedge-lines on the current OS map. Five farms adjoin the track, but none owns it – it seems to be a 'no-man's land' – is it owned by the Parish, or the County Council?

Re-tracing our steps back up the lane the terrain, although wet underfoot after heavy rain and somewhat uneven and deeply rutted in places, was walkable – the vegetation having died down (in summer it is an impenetrable barrier 5' high of nettles and bracken). Again, there were great views from the higher points on the track.

When reaching the Pressen road at the end of the lane, most of the group returned to Pressen, leaving 3 of us to walk the footpath past Selby's Hill towards Sunilaws. This follows the hedge-line for $\frac{3}{4}$ mile on a narrow strip of grass by arable crops. The northern half is obscured by game cover, with feeders right next to the hedge. On the map the footpath changes along the route from the west to east side of the hedge, and there are no way-markers – one or two in relevant places would be useful.

This was an enjoyable walk on a sunny morning and with great views - hopefully more people will get out and enjoy these paths in the future; we in the parish are working to improve them so that they are accessible to all!