

CARHAM PARISH FOOTPATHS WALK ON SATURDAY 2ND MARCH 2019

Members of Carham and Cornhill parishes, including walkers from Norham Walking Group and 4 Borders Abbeys U3A, totalling 23 walkers and 3 dogs, met at East Learmouth Farm (grid ref NT863373) for our 3.5 mile walk to review 2 more footpaths and part of a byway in the parish.

Setting off we backtracked along the lane towards Cornhill, forking right at the Carham war memorial to reach bridge abutments on the old Cornhill to Alnwick railway, where the existing footpath from Cornhill ends. It was a bit of a scramble over a fence and up the embankment to the line, which is not a confirmed public right of way, although some OS maps of 1:50 scale show it as such. By making it an official footpath it would join up with the path at 865372. Here there is a public footpath signpost and a ladder stile, but the route is not accessible due to a large amount of stone blocking the path - dumped when dismantling the adjacent bridge abutments.

There was a track entrance here through which we continued on the path towards Tithe Hill Farm. It must have looked like 'mass trespass' with the large group filing across the field (the path not being marked on the ground)! On the farm boundary we crossed a stile with a waymark, along a path through crops to the farm. From here there were no signs or waymarks through the farm until the open gate SW of the farm, at 867361, where the mark on the post is easily missed. There were no waymarks or signs at all for the next 1.5 miles. A surfaced and mown track (more like a road) passed through large arable fields to meet the byway at 868356 that runs from the Hagg to East Moneylaws. There were several tracks/roads adjoining the byway at various points, which would make route-finding problematic without a map.

Looking to the SE, our resident Cornhill geologist, Elizabeth Devon, pointed out the ridges of volcanic lava flows across the hill – here is an excerpt from her walk notes:-

Up until this point we had been walking on ground covered with water-worn boulders and debris carried here by meltwater from the glaciers of the last ice advance, but as we got towards the hills we were beginning to encounter lavas from the Cheviot volcanic eruptions of 400 million years ago. Of course, only remnants of the huge lava fields now exist, the rest having been eroded away and much of what is left covered by more recent deposits from ice and rivers as well as peat formation.



These appear to be to be two distinct lava flows

The byway led east on an undulating grass/stone track bordered on one side by a stone wall up to a viewpoint at 872357 where we stopped to look at the the Erskine Monument. This granite pillar, erected in 1876, is a memorial to Henry Erskine (b.1624) a non-conformist and dissenter who was minister at Cornhill, and lived at Old Moneylaws, a house near this site now demolished. His son, Ralph Erskine, a dissenter and puritan (born here in 1685) ministered in Dunfermline and formed a new church there. He was also well-known for his many sermons and poems.



Walkers at the Erskine Monument

At the end of this attractive length of track, passing tracks to East Moneylaws to our left, and West Moneylaws to our right, (again, no signs of waymarks) we continued up the hill on a straight track, climbing gradually then more steeply, up to 200m/650ft. Hopefully the panoramic views, taking in the Eildons and the Tweed Valley, compensated for the stiff climb!

To our left we passed the side banks and flat top of East Moneylaws camp, a scheduled monument at 881354. This is an early iron age 'defended settlement', (as is the nearby Castle Hill camp on Moneylaws Hill). It is covered by later ridge and furrow cultivations, so there are more ditch and bank features below the surface. We noticed a retaining stone wall on the south side which one assumes is of a later date.

We followed the route of the footpath across a level field, with good views to our left and Moneylaws hill to our right, to the parish boundary at 881350 through a wicket gate with a waymark. The footpath continued across a field to a narrow wood, climbing a stile with a waymark. Reaching the south side of the wood, about half our number said that they would re-trace their steps rather than go down the hill to the finish point just to climb back up again!

From here, at 882346, we had a wonderful view of the Cheviot range and over the Bowmont Valley, before heading downhill to the finish point, a holiday cottage facing Barley Hill to the Southeast. Conveniently, our remaining numbers could share the 3 cars we had left here, for the return to the start.

We were pleased that the weather stayed dry, and glad to bring these footpaths to the attention of those who were unfamiliar with them. Well done to everyone for making it over the 'steepish' hill! (See poster)



Near the end of the walk, overlooking the Bowmont Valley

Many thanks to Elizabeth for her walk notes, Mick Plunkett for his photos, to the backmarkers and car transport, and to everyone who participated in the walk.