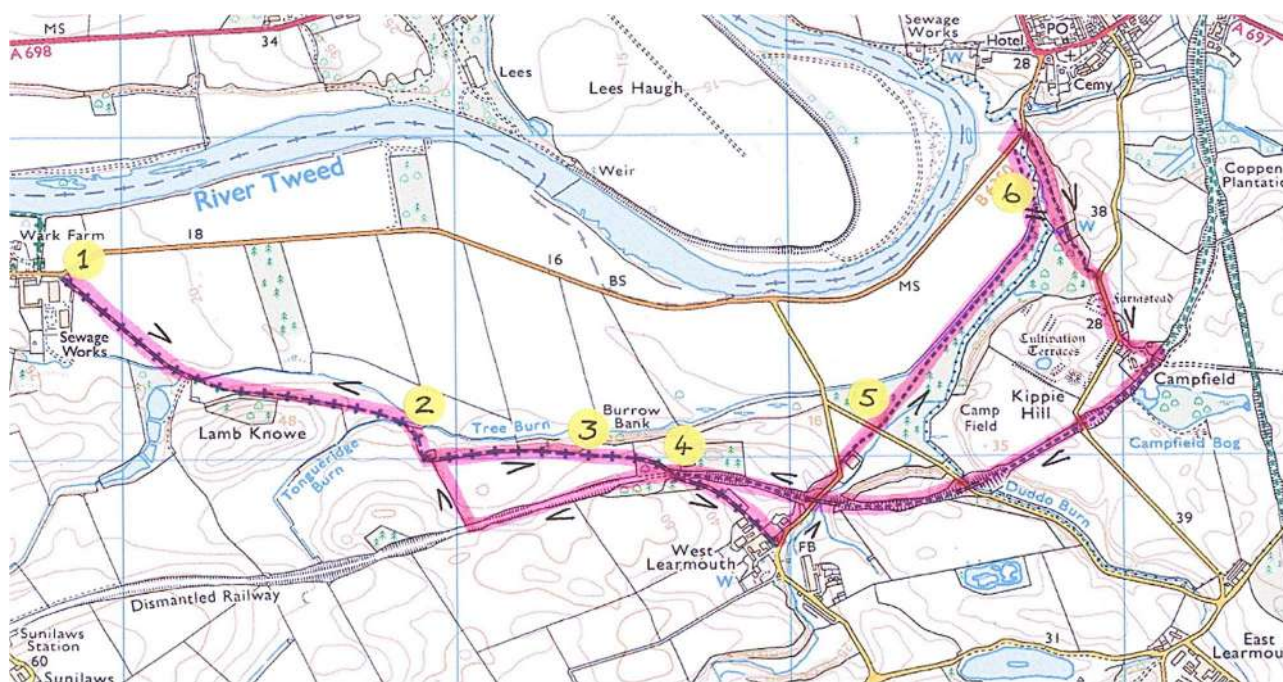


CARHAM PARISH FOOTPATHS WALK REPORT – September 2021



This walk (highlighted) was the start of the second round of walking the parish byways and footpaths – it was our first walk as Carham Parish Footpaths Group in July 2018. The main aim of the group is to regularly walk and monitor the public rights of way in the parish, and to help in keeping them open and accessible to all.

A good number of eleven walkers took part; the odd bit of drizzle didn't dampen our enjoyment! At the very beginning of the byway to West Learmouth from Wark, the broken signpost lying on the verge was the first item noted as needing attention (See 1 on map). A good clear mown track led between high hedges full of hawthorn and elderberries – good for birds and wildlife (one of us harvested a huge puffball on our return, which was hidden under the hedge). A field gate opened onto a grass field where the way was clearly seen as a benched, or levelled, track. A byway marker post was broken and down on the ground.



In the past, public ways were either passed by horse and cart or by foot – they were either 'bridle roads' or footpaths, established to travel between settlements or farms or to get to school or church. What are now byways or bridleways had equal status with other roads, as can be seen on a map of 1820.

Spot the byway!

The track deteriorated at Tongueridge Burn, which can be difficult to cross when in flood. The gate and stile beyond are in poor repair – the stile needs attention but there is a new catch on the gate (2)



The rest of the byway route was very overgrown, but there were signs of use, and the way ahead was clearer now that the plantation on the left has been felled. It was good to see that the correct route is being followed, but it was slow-going!

Our way was made more awkward due to the fact that the path across the field, through a cover/wildlife crop, had not been cut or reinstated (3) so we took the 'easier' way on the stubble - (If a right of way is not clearly defined through a crop, walkers tend to spread out over a wider area).



Where the railway line crosses the byway, a waymark post shows the footpath in the direction of Cornhill – perhaps a byway sign could be added. Also, the signpost pointing to Cornhill had been broken and dislodged (4)

We crossed the line to walk down the clear track to West Learmouth Farm, turning left along the road and under West

Learmouth viaduct to the large potato-store shed where a signpost shows the footpath to the right and through a new plantation (the stile behind the shed is now redundant as the fence has been removed) to the road with a signpost and stile.



Across the road there is a good stile in the hedge, but the signpost to Cornhill is broken (5) there are waymark signs on these stiles. It was good to find that the way from the stile had been mown, through the poplar plantation right to the footbridge over Tree Burn, which made the going much easier - thanks to West Learmouth Farm!

Unfortunately, this section is overgrown and impassable for most of the year, when it hasn't been cut.

On the other side of the footbridge a waymark sign would be useful to direct walkers coming from Cornhill (6). The path continuing to the Cornhill road is overgrown, so it was easier to walk on the edge of the crop.



At the road we crossed the bridge over Duddo Burn and over the boundary into Cornhill Parish, turning right along the footpath on the other side of the burn. The footpath runs through what was known as 'Bathingwell Plantation'- a 'W' (well) on the current OS map marks the site of a spa, or bath, which was frequented in the 18th and early 19th centuries for its medicinal properties¹. The walk continued on the road to Campfield, passing an undulating field on the right with a strange mixture of earthworks – the remains of a farmstead, cultivation terraces, and Kippie Hill, a natural glacial mound possibly used as a burial site in the bronze age.

We turned left up the track at Campfield, where there used to be a substantial 18th century farm complex, to reach the public footpath along the railway line (now a well-used, tree-lined path) passing Campfield Bog, or Kettle hole, a Site of Special Scientific Interest - also of glacial origin².



Road bridge over the
Railway



Further along we passed back over the boundary into Carham Parish as we crossed the second of the two magnificent viaducts on our route (we had walked beneath the first earlier in the walk) which were built in 1849 and are grade 2 listed³. After pausing to take in the views, we continued on over the West Learmouth viaduct back to where the byway from Wark crosses the line.

From here, it was too tempting, not to say much easier, to carry on along the railway line towards Sunilaws and turning right along a wide field edge to reach the byway further on, thus avoiding the most overgrown part! We then continued back to Wark.

For further information –

¹ <https://www.cornhillsocialhistory.org.uk/Buildings.html>

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Campfield_Kettle_Hole

³ <https://carhamparish.org/railways/>

<https://www.cornhillsocialhistory.org.uk/Railways.html>

NB :- Items needing attention (Numbers 1-6) have been reported, along with condition of paths, to Northumberland County Council.