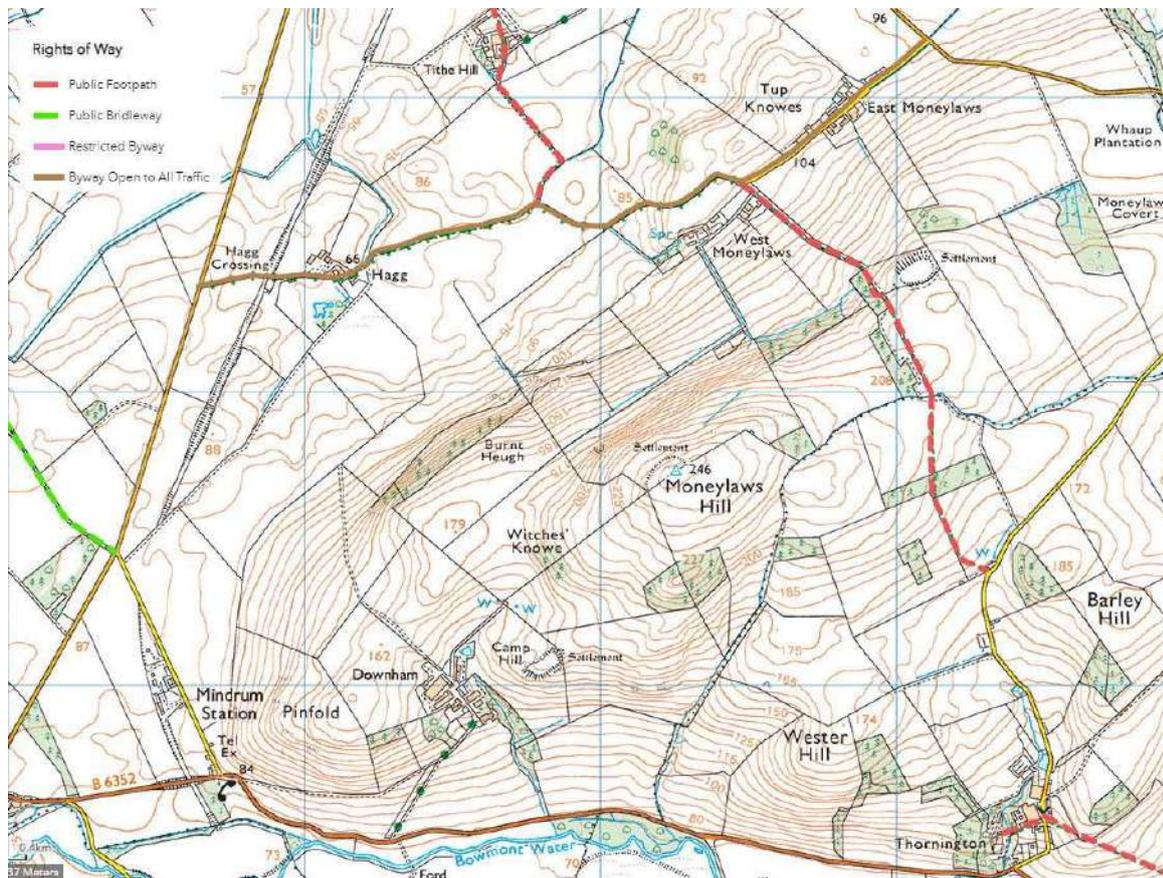


## CARHAM PARISH FOOTPATH WALK – 16<sup>th</sup> July 2022



Definitive Map, showing area covered by our walk, with Rights of Way. (Crown Copyright OS 2022 100064529 (2022) Northumberland County Council)

On a morning of warm sunshine, eleven walkers met at Mindrum Station for our latest walk in the parish. The circular route included some of the byway and the footpath covered on a previous walk in March 2019. (See link below)

From the station we walked up the lane to the Yetholm to Cornhill road (noticing the very overgrown state of the bridleway opposite at the southern end of Piperdean Lane) before turning right to continue along the straight stretch of road to the byway at the entrance to The Hagg farm.

Much of this track is well-maintained by the farmers for their own use, and is, in theory, a BOAT - Byway Open to All Traffic (see map). However, as mentioned in the 2019 report, there are no signposts indicating the byway, and no right of way signs along the whole length of the byway. At the junction of the path to Tithe Hill Farm, a 'Private Road No Access' sign should indicate that it is also a footpath, so as not to confuse and prohibit walkers. Further along the track, another 'Private Road' sign on the right indicates the way to West Moneylaws, while the byway continues through a gate and follows an undulating track - luckily the waist-high vegetation had dried out after the recent rain!



Although this section is very overgrown in comparison with the rest of the byway, it is the prettiest - flanked by stone walls and uncut hedges (a pair of whitethroats were spotted) with wildflowers such as hogweed, field scabious and meadow geranium. (The 'tidy' part of the track is not totally devoid of wildlife – reed buntings and sedge warblers can be seen or heard in the oil seed rape crop, and I have seen hares when checking the route). On a high point of the overgrown path we passed the Erskine monument, which commemorates Henry Erskine and his son Ralph, who were non-conformist ministers and dissenters in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and who lived nearby. (See link below)

There are no right of way signs at the end of this section, where we crossed a tarmac road, which goes right to West Moneylaws;

the byway continuing left to East Moneylaws and the Branxton road. We followed the footpath ahead along a concrete track rising steeply up the hill. As it was very warm, we took our time going up, stopping to appreciate the expansive views to the north.



To our left we could see the first of three iron-age 'defended settlements'\* on our walk, on East Moneylaws Hill. The footpath across the field ahead had not been reinstated, so we followed the mown grass margin round the edge to the footpath gate into the next field. From here the footpath continues south through a plantation and out to the road at Barley Hill, but we turned right to make our way over Moneylaws Hill (240m, over 800ft above sea level). This route is not a public right of way and was taken with the landowner's permission.



Photo, Mick Plunkett

On the summit, there is little evidence of the second of the settlements\* in this area - a semi-circular earthwork on the north side, not visible to us behind a stone wall. But we sat for a while to enjoy the light breeze, and great views from the top, trying to orientate ourselves and spot places and landmarks!



On the steep descent to Downham Farm, the third settlement\* could be seen on Camphill, it's northern edge a rock crag. Another final steep descent took us back down to Mindrum Station.

(Photo, Mick Plunkett)



View of  
Bowmont Valley  
from above  
Downham Farm

(Photo, Mick  
Plunkett)

Although it was warm work, with steep ascents and descents, we enjoyed the walk over the hill, with viewpoints not normally seen, thanks to the farmers David and Tom Neill, who kindly gave us permission to access the route.

<https://carhamparish.files.wordpress.com/2022/03/walk-3-report-20190302-1.pdf>

<https://carhamparish.org/memorials-and-monuments/>

There is also a lot of information about Henry and Ralph Erskine online.

\* <https://carhamparish.org/iron-age-settlements/>