UPDATE – Feb 2014

Please note that the landowner claims the section of road between Home Farm and Greengate Lane is private property and anybody using it may be taken to court for trespassing.

This road is a historic right of way, and until 2025 it is questionable whether a court would support the claim; however, in the interests of fostering good relationships with the landowners both North Yorkshire County Council and Northallerton Striders ask that you do not use this bit of road.

This is in contrast to the reception we had in Summer 2012 when we were unable to follow the path due to the density of the crop in the ‘big’ field and we ended up being invited to walk through the farmyard by a very pleasant gentleman (with a very noisy puppy). Having ‘deviated’ from the marked path twice and being invited to walk through the farmyard at either end of this path, I feel this is not only one of the nicest walks in the area, but one of the most friendly; hopefully NYCC will sort out the access problems quickly and we can revisit this route in the near future.

Walk log

Friday 25th November 2011

Kirkby Fleetham, Kirkby Hall and Great Fencote

6.7 Km (4 miles). 4 stiles, 1 stream crossing with fairly steep banks.

We parked in the pub car park, and headed out along Lowfield Lane. There was a watery sun, but it had been raining just earlier and there were thick black clouds to the West. The wind was south-westerly, not too strong at the time, and the forecast had said it would be mainly dry until noon. The road was fairly quiet and wide enough that cars could get past without a problem, and it was just a short walk round to the footpath.

This footpath is signed, and it is slightly closer to the stream than it appears on the map. As you reach the bend, watch out for the two gates either side of the stream – the footpath fords the stream at this point and goes around the right bank past the farm. We actually missed this, and by the time we realised the farmer had invited us to go through the farmyard instead. With the negative attitude a lot of farmers have towards walkers, it was nice to find one who is so pleasant – in fact he complained that he only saw walkers through there about once a year.

Beyond the farmyard you have a choice. The footpath heads straight across this field, over the stile in the hedge and straight across the field beyond, but the farmer had suggested that we should go through the gate and walk around the edge of the field and we were happy to oblige - the track found here is quite clear and pleasant to walk around, while the field have been newly ploughed. The photos were taken along the side of this field, and then my batteries went flat and I couldn't take any more. This was unfortunate as it really was a day worth recording.

There were some birds along here which were either small turkeys or large quail, and further around there are a number of birdfeeders, so it is obvious the farmer is encouraging game birds to the area.

At the end of this field there is a new copse been planted, with high deer fences around. Look out for the (slightly wobbly) stile in the corner, and go through the gap in the copse to the very large field beyond. From here you can see Kirkby Hall on the far side, but as the field had been ploughed and the footpath had not been reinstated it was difficult to identify the course. We decided to take the shortest route, just to the right of the barn which gave us some protection from a shower which came over at that time – the wind was also freshening, and the calm in the lee of the barn was quite welcome.

From the barn, it was possible to see that there had been another copse planted on the far side, again with a gap in the deer fence so we headed directly towards this. Beyond there was a small field and then the fence surrounding the barn and cottage near Home Farm. Where the footpath was supposed to pass here there was no sign of the stile and the area beyond was very overgrown, but just to the right of the barn there was a gate which led through to the lane beyond.

There is no public right of way marked on the definitive map for Kirkby Lane, but there is an application with the county council to have this marked, and there was no problem following it as it climbs around to the road.

From here, we headed south down Greengate Lane to arrive on Lumley Lane just after 12 o'clock. Some people decided that this was enough and headed back towards the village. The rest of us crossed Lumley Lane and headed off down the footpath towards Great Fencote, through a field of fodder beet (or possibly swede). Halfway across his fields there was an electric fence which we crossed with care – it was low enough to just step over and did not appear to be on, although nobody touched it to find out – and after another stile and a couple of gates, we arrived at Anna Garth Farm. Just before the gate into the farmyard we turned left and could see the village of Kirby Fleetham ahead of us, we could also feel the rain which was starting to come down and by the time we got to the next gate we were feeling decidedly wet. This was still better than the feeling in the next field when the rain turned to small hailstones being blown sideways by wind approaching gale force. Fortunately this only lasted about five minutes, but that was enough to thoroughly soak us all down one side while the other side was still totally dry.

Reaching the fence along the back of the gardens we turn left, over the stile and then over another stile into the pub car park. This very convenient shortcut is not really visible on the map as the green line is overprinted with a big beer mug, but you may have noticed the footpath sign at the entrance to the car park on your way in.

Despite looking a bit posh, the pub was one of the best bits of this walk – the staff were very welcoming, they have stone flagged floors so no problems about going in with wet shoes on, and they had an open fire to sit and steam around.

Two different people told me this was one of the best walks they have been on with the Strollers, and despite the hailstones I totally agree with them. Definitely a place we will be returning to.