

Short / Medium Walk, 9th. March 2020

The Reivers' Way

Seaton Burn to Killingworth (4 miles) or Northumberland Park (5½ miles)

Today's plans involved a lunch stop at Bill Quay Community Farm. However, reports of the farm's reopening have proved premature, so this walk will be rescheduled, and instead we will make another attempt on the one that was washed out last time.

The Reivers' Way is a cycle route which starts at Tynemouth and goes through North Tyneside and southern Northumberland to the Kielder Reservoir, before briefly crossing the Scottish border and taking a circuitous course through Cumbria to Workington. Walkers can of course use this route as well, and can use footpaths as well as bridleways, in order to vary the route and avoid being forced onto the roads as cyclists sometimes are. Much of the official route is off-road, however, and today's walk incorporates a section where it follows the old Seaton Burn Waggonway (roughly along the northern edge of the conurbation).

We meet this time at **Gateshead**, because that is what is on the programme, then take the Metro to **Haymarket**. Anyone who finds it more convenient may meet us at the Bus Station there. From the Haymarket we take the No. 43 to Seaton Burn, alighting beside the Six Mile Bridge where the (old) Great North Road crosses the burn. A few yards beyond this, we turn off where the Reivers' Way crosses the road. The route immediately establishes a pattern which will be repeated several times: a gravel surface, still in quite good condition, between hedgerows, with houses to the right and open fields to the left. Where the track takes a sharp bend we enter Weetslade Country Park, created by reclaiming former colliery land. An information board lists the many species of birds that may be seen here, and gorse bushes are adding a splash of colour to the slopes of the pit-heap.

After exiting through the car park, we cross under the A189 trunk road and over the main East Coast railway, then another half mile or so brings us to the B1505 on the borders of Burradon and Camperdown. A Millennium Green here has seats which will make a good place for an outdoor lunch, while tea and coffee are obtainable from the Grey Horse Inn next to the green (they do not serve food, but there are no objections to bringing in our own). An information board on the green tells of the history of Burradon, and serves as a memorial to 76 men and boys (some as young as 10), killed in an explosion at Burradon Colliery in 1860.

After lunch we continue along the Reivers' Way as it threads its way between and around recent housing developments before rejoining the old waggonway on the outskirts of Camperdown. A stretch of open country follows, before we skirt Killingworth. On the far side of the new town we emerge onto the B1317 road, where the short walk ends. Just around a corner is a bus stop from which there is a half-hourly service to Newcastle on the No.54.

At the point we have reached, Reivers' Way cyclists turn left to go through Backworth on the road network. Rather than follow them, our medium walk goes the opposite way, using what seems to have become a semi-official alternative to the Reivers'. A short distance along the road, we turn off along a farm track (somewhat muddy, but still in reasonably good condition). At Holystone Farm, just short of the Metro line, we turn off and go through an underpass under the A19 road. On the far side, a new housing estate is being built, but this also incorporates a cycle path, which we follow for some way before turning off through the streets to Northumberland Park Metro station and the end of our walk.