

STEPPING OUT

A series of walks in the East Leake area.

This year I am describing walks that will take you along all the 27 rights of way in the parish of East Leake. Each footpath is given an official number and in any contact with the county or parish footpath authorities it is useful if you can indicate the footpath number.

So far in this series since January I have covered footpaths nos: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 19 and 21.

This month's walk takes you along no.11 which at 1¾ miles is the longest path in the parish. You will also walk along footpaths 11(a), 24 and 25.

Rights of way are so called because the public has an absolute right to pass along the route. It is illegal to obstruct the path in any way. Rights of way are footpaths, bridleways or byways and no. 11 is the first byway we have encountered in the series. Footpaths, as the name suggests, gives you a right of passage on foot. Bridleways in addition allow passage on horseback or cycle. There are two kinds of byways. A byway open to all traffic (BOAT) allows the passage of any vehicle – and they are popular with motorcycles and four-wheel-drive cars. Restricted byways however are banned to motorised vehicles but are open to horse-drawn vehicles. In addition there will usually be arrangements to allow owners and occupiers of property along a byway to have vehicular access to that property. Most of the rights of way in the parish are footpaths and I will make it very clear in the series when a path is a bridleway or a byway. No 11 is a byway open to all traffic (BOAT) for the first half mile and a restricted byway for the rest of its length. In addition to no.11 this walk will include paths no. 11(a); 24 and 25 which are all footpaths.

Byway no. 11 and footpath 25 to the parish boundary.

Return via footpaths 11(a) and 24.

3¾ miles allow 1½ to 2 hours.

Walk along Lantern Lane. Byway no.11 starts just after Sharpley Drive on your left and Harry Carlton School on your right. You will soon pass Sheep Plank Lane on your right and then the fingerpost indicating footpath 10(b) to your left (described last month). Carry walking along the lane to the point where it takes a right angled turn to the left. This is the point at which it becomes a restricted byway. Carry on past Taft Leys and you will notice the fingerposts indicating where footpath 10 crosses the byway (described last month). You then follow the byway up the hill. At the top of the hill you are rewarded with a fine view – the blue roofs of some of the buildings of Nottingham Trent University at Clifton being clearly distinguishable. At the top of this hill, at just over 300ft (95m) you are on one of the highest points in the area – slightly higher than Bunny Hill, West Leake Hills and Hoton Hills and

about the same height as Gotham Hills. All these hills owe their presence to a layer of resistant limestone over the clay that dominates this area. The clay is very easily eroded by the weather. At one time the limestone was much more extensive but as it was eroded the clay beneath it was exposed and this eroded very easily creating deep valleys.. This left the ridges and hills of the district with the underlying clay protected from erosion by fairly small caps of limestone. Evidence of these limestone caps can still be found in lumps of limestone lying around on the hills but more particularly in the foundations of older buildings in the villages and especially in the building stones of the churches of East Leake and Costock.

Carry on down the hill at the other side. Until recently this stretch of path was almost impassable in wet weather but, as part of the Parish Path Partnership scheme (3P's), several tons of stone have been put down to improve matters considerably.

The byway eventually brings you out onto Bunny Lane. Turn right along the lane, walk past the entrance to Welldale Farm and you will notice fingerposts indicating footpaths to the left and right. Walking along the footpath to the left, through an arable field, brings you to a bridge over a ditch in the corner of the field. This is the parish boundary from where the path continues as Bunny footpath number 7. You turn round at this point for your return journey.

On reaching the road take the footpath immediately across the road indicated by the fingerpost. This is footpath 11(a) which goes across an arable field. When I walked it a short while ago the footpath was clearly visible on the ground. At the end of the field you will cross a bridge over a ditch to rejoin byway no.11. Turn left and go over the hill as you retrace your steps to Lantern Lane.

But you haven't quite finished yet! Footpath no.24 is a bit out on a limb and if you really want to cover ALL the paths in the parish this is the easiest point to include no. 24. So on reaching Lantern Lane, turn right along Sharpley Drive and on your left between numbers 56 and 58 you will find footpath no.24 which brings you out in Ryholme Close between numbers 11 and 12. From Ryholme Close turn left along St Mary's Crescent and back into Lantern Lane.

Dennis Fox