Walk 2

Continuing your walk, south along the village street, along Back O’Newton, down Carr Lane and across to Wilberfoss.

It’s a lovely day, you’re not tired and you want to extend your walk. (1) Let’s continue along the main street of Newton upon Derwent, looking for curiosities that will remind you of your visit.

The street runs north to south, so on your right, the west, you’ll see Briardene with another example of a fire window and more tumbling bricks in the gables.

On the same side of the road is The Poplars, built in 1868, some say with the winnings from a famous greyhound race. Set in a lovely garden, the house is “an attractive brick and slate three-bay building with central bay projecting slightly under the pediment.” ( Pevsner 1972). It is said that the summer of 1868 was very dry. Water pumps dried up and the only well with water available was Mary’s Well outside Westfield House. The builders had to carry water in buckets along the street.

The poplars that once lined the drive were felled many years ago but the 150 year old horse chestnut tree still frames the village street. It’s fruit, the conkers, are eagerly collected by the village children. In WW1 children were paid to collect conkers and acorns as they could be fermented to produce acetone…an ingredient used in making cordite needed in ammunition. Children were very active in the war effort and were also encouraged to collect eggs to be sent to the soldiers fighting at the front. They wrote their names and addresses on the eggs and many children received thank-you letters from grateful soldiers. The fruits of the hedgerow like brambles, rosehips and crab apples were collected to include in jams and jellies when sugar was rationed. Everyone was rewarded for the number of rats tails they caught as these vermin were devouring tons of the precious wheat in store!

Here again, you can see that the larger C18th farmhouses face the street and the former agricultural labourers’ cottages are south facing. Many of these semi-detached, one or two room cottages have been made into one large house, except for Sunnycroft which we believe was once a single house and is now two.

Walk along the pavement until you see Derwent House on your left. This house was probably built in the 1860’s and in 1911 was home to the Jacques Family. Frederick Jacques and his wife, Fannie had 11 children, 8 boys and 3 girls. Frederick was a farmer and in 1901 all the children were living at home. The four older ones were all working on the farm, as farm labourers, dairymaids and domestic servants. Two boys, Richard and Alwyn, fought in and survived WW1 and are listed on the village memorial in the Chapel.

The new cul de sac of Village Farm is on the site of a former pig farm. The old Village Farm was demolished as were the outbuildings which formed the joiner’s and wheelwright’s workshop in the C19th and early C20th. In the 1800’s the joiner was the kingpin in the village economy. He was a builder, a wheelwright and an agricultural implement maker.

Opposite on the site where Wold Grange now stands was the joiner’s saw pit. Cutting tree trunks required one man in a deep pit and a second man sitting astride the trunk that had been placed across the pit. Following the chalk marks carefully measured by the joiner, the planks were cut. For the under man, work was dangerous and very dirty, constantly getting covered in sawdust. The phrase “top dog” and “under dog” derives from this situation. Nothing was wasted from a tree trunk. The bark was stripped and sold to the local tanner.

Penrose Farm displays a Yorkshire Insurance plaque which is embossed with a scene depicting the west end of York Minster and the date, 1824. The date refers to the foundation of the insurance company and not to the house. We believe that a building stood on this site prior to 1755. The house mirrors Ashville at the other end of the village, in having a hipped roof of slate. This roof design was popular with the C 19th architects of local Methodist Chapels (but not Newton’s) and probably reflects the denomination of the family. Inside it has two staircases: one for the family and one for the live- in servant boys and girls to reach their bedrooms. In 1851 there were 17 people living in this house: can you believe it! Mr and Mrs Penrose, their 9 children, domestic servants, live- in farm lads and a visiting cattle dealer from Hexham!

Next door we find Carrier House. The name tells us that in the C19th the village carrier lived here. Later in the early C20th it was the village general store, supplying candles (for lighting) and paraffin (for heating) to the Chapel, animal feedstuffs to the village farmers and baking ingredients to the farmers wives.

What was a carrier? He was another linchpin in the village community. He took a horse- drawn cart to York market, twice a week. The farmers’ wives would ride with him as they took their produce to market. They would sell eggs, butter and cream, chickens and rabbits ready for the oven. Before returning home, he would run errands for the villagers, collecting ordered goods from the York shops, like material, ribbons and lace for the village dressmaker and pens and ink for the letter writers. Local preachers would also take a ride on the cart and there would be much chatter and gossiping along the 8 bumpy miles home from York.

Opposite Penrose Farm we take a public footpath across a field once called Hall Garth. We go through a kissing gate, on to the road named Back O’Newton, opposite Barn Cottage. Many footpaths would have been created, like this one, by the postman, walking across fields and over streams to deliver and collect post twice a day. He would have crossed over Back O’ Newton and continued to Gale Farm. (From there he would have crossed many fields back to Wilberfoss Post Office).

Pevsner (1972) noted Barn Cottage is quite unique. “It is late C18th, one and a half storeys, three bays, brick and pantile with tumbled gables. An unusual plan for this date consisting of a cottage with a central stack and a small integral barn at the north end.”

We’re going to turn left and walk very cautiously along the B road. Traffic travels very fast on this narrow country lane so take care.

Was this high road once a drover’s path across the Escrick moraine? Can you imagine the drover with his pack horses, plodding along, their goods hung in paniers on either side of their flanks?

From this vantage point you have a clear view of the Yorkshire Wolds, a chalk escarpment. You can see from the White Horse at Kilburn to the Humber Bridge.

Carry on along this road to Wilberfoss unless you want to extend your walk.

If so, turn right into Bull Balk, a quieter road which leads to Carr Lane. This once led down to Newton Carr, a boggy shrubland, covered with gorse and reeds. 250 years ago, villagers would graze their sheep and cattle here. They would use the reeds to repair their thatched roofs and collect wood for their fires which would not only light their hovels but provide heat on which to boil their pans of pottage.

Having walked over the bridge, crossing the Foss Beck, we come to a straight road. This stretch of Carr Lane was created at the enclosure of 1766 and continues along to join the Hull to York road. (A1079)

To your right, one field inland to CKW Farm, was the village marle pit. Marle was spread on the sandy land to create a rich loamy soil. It was also used to line field ponds to prevent seepage.

Opposite CKW is Holly Farm, once known as Pigeoncote Farm because it had a distinctive dovecote. All farmsteads had pigeon lofts which would provide eggs and meat for the family. This farm is where our brave WW1 soldier, Harry Blanchard Wood was born in 1882.

Having come to a sharp right-hand bend, we find another footpath and a waymarker directing us to Wilberfoss.

Cross several fields and come to the A1079. If you’re catching the X46, then here is your bus stop. Cross over the busy road if you’re catching a 46 or 47 bus to York.

There are four bus stops for York in Wilberfoss. Before the second one is the only village pub still open. In 1890, there were three. The name, Oddfellows Inn refers to a friendly society, set up in England in 1810. By joining a friendly society, workers could protect themselves and their families against illness, injury or death. Our local “lodge” met here. The Oddfellows would help their members in so many ways. For example, they would employ a Doctor for their members, before the NHS was created in 1948.

Interestingly, the pub used to be called “The True Briton” in 1820, after the stagecoach that left Hull, every morning at 6am to travel to York, then Leeds, Manchester and Liverpool. Perhaps the horses were changed here.

The main bus stop is opposite the Costcutter store and Post Office.

Have a safe journey home but come back another day to wander round this lovely Yorkshire village. Visit the Church of St John the Baptist and imagine the Priory, once adjacent to it until the dissolution in 1538. The nuns were a rebellious lot. In 1308 they were reprimanded for wearing red dresses and long, secular-styled tunics. They were also known to sit up after ‘compline’(the last evening prayer) with visitors in the guest house!