

Hello Malcolm,

any news on the visit yet?. I drove up to Henwoodie yesterday. After your problem finding it I decided to buy a GPS (ground position satellite) to assist and I am glad I did because I would never have found it otherwise!.

I set off from Blyth at 0830 and had a good drive up passing through Canonbie. For some reason I took a left off the A7 at Teviothead only to pass a sign about Johnnie Armstrong's grave site!, so I stopped and took some photos, a little uncanny as I had no reason to turn off.

I then passed through Langholm (stopped on the way back, a beautiful place but who in Gods name gave the go ahead for the concrete flats?) and on up to Robertson. Much smaller than I had anticipated, took some photos of the church and asked a couple across the road for advice on Henwoodie. They invited me in and I was there an hour discussing Henwoodie, Armstrong's and many other people and places, some familiar, some not - very interesting.

I then took the turnoff for Craik Forest and drove until what I thought was the track to take me to Henwoodie, I anticipated driving all the way there - how wrong!!. My GPS gadget was ticking down 7 miles, 6 miles 5 miles etc pointing the direction all the time. The reasonable track had gone and I was now driving on very rough road indeed, some horrendous noises from underneath the car as the stones and wood jumped up.

Finally I managed to get it down to 0.94 miles and that was as close as I could get, there obviously had been a track going further in the past but certainly not now. The GPS pointed straight up through wet bog and dense forest so that is the way I went stumbling regularly, luckily I had brought my hiking boots. It must have taken nearly an hour to walk one mile!, as I came down the other side of the hill, I could see all that was left of Henwoodie, a clearing in a small valley with stone walls. A lovely area but oh so isolated.

The GPS was counting down to single figures in feet as I walked up to the dry stone walls. There was no evidence at all of the old cottage. There was an old gate, the telephone pole in the original picture, the walls again shown in the photo, some of the original trees etc. It was very quiet and peaceful and the sun was shining. The forest behind that I presume was not there at all in the old days has been planted up to the barbed wire fence behind the cottage and is certainly very dense. I pocketed a small piece of the wall for posterity and headed for home. The walk back was about as unpleasant as the walk there!, however it was worth it even when you take into account the puncture I got driving back out the forest!. After putting the spare on I drove back past the Free Church that we suspect Francis turned to shortly after 1843, I have a picture as well as one of the Church in Robertson. The photos of Henwoodie land don't really show much but I have attached one anyway. Even armed with a map I would never have found it.

I then drove up to Hawick, had something to eat at the market and then turned for home stopping off at Langholm, resisting the urge to go to Langshawburn, Eskdalemuir. time was moving on and it was now nearly five o'clock.

Arrived home 6.15, tired and glad to be back!