

## **Shorter Walks Group**

### **April 2022 Cotherstone circular 4m**

#### **Report by Vivien Hodgson and Dorothy Binks**

On a cool April day, a party of 12 met at Cotherstone church and proceeded along the railway. After negotiating one or two rabbit potholes, we were able to enjoy the spring green and burgeoning spring flowers – marsh marigolds, primroses, stitchwort and blackthorn – until we reached the viaduct over the Balder beck.

A short distance further on, we climbed the steps to the fields towards Doe Park – lambs looking strong and happy, and on the banks, our first sightings of the wonderful English bluebells, can't beat them for vibrancy! We went past the caravan park, on through the fields with yet more marsh marigolds, to the road bridge.

A short walk along the road took us to the path towards the Hagg but we bore right, up the hill, past the mound where the castle used to be and then on to the path, high above the river. Again, more spring flowers and new leaves – interesting to see Elm trees regenerating (a bonus to have a tree expert in our midst!). We passed the leaf sculpture, one of the series of Teesdale viewmarkers, where we spotted a hare in the field. Then past the tomb of Abraham Hilton, one of the benefactors of Barnard Castle.

Further along the river we turned right through a field to a single track path by a stream where we saw more wild flowers, among them early campion and butterbur, to a stile which took us up the field, over another stile, crossing the beck again on a large single stone bridge, to the memorial garden and pond.

We then crossed the field to the Quaker Meeting House which is still in use. Here our attention was drawn to the larch trees and the Chilean Pine (not a native). We continued to the lane and back to our starting point.

We enjoyed a fine day and great company but best of all, we felt spring had arrived!