

Two Types of Wall



Dry-stone walls are made from stones placed on top of each other, and have no mortar between the stones. However, they do usually have a 'soft centre' with small bits of stone and even earth filling the space between the faces.



Many walls look like dry-stone walls from a distance, but, if you look closely, you will see they have mortar between courses. Sometimes this mortar is lime-based (a rather coarse, but 'soft' mortar which allows stone to expand/contract, and also allows plants to gain a foothold); more often it is cement-based (a smoother, and harder mortar which is not particularly good for stone - or for plants). Most of the walls in the village are cement-mortared.



Hart's-tongue Fern

Some flowering plants can survive on walls provided they receive plenty of light. Conversely, many ferns are happy on damp walls in shaded areas.

Many people admire the village of Kirkoswald with its attractive jumble of old buildings, its cobbles and its quiet corners. Part of the charm of the village comes from the fact that red sandstone is the main construction material for buildings and for walls.



Many plants find walls a place where they can establish themselves. Some non-native species are placed there deliberately by people. You can see lots of these colourful plants (such as Yellow Alyssum and Aubretia) on walls in the village, particularly along the road leading out of the village towards Staffield / Armathwaite, but this leaflet focuses on native plants which have colonised walls.



Yellow Alyssum, a garden plant



Shining Cranesbill, a native plant

Taking A Closer Look At Kirkoswald's Walls



Common Vetch on wall top

This leaflet will show you some of the interesting native plants growing in and on walls in Kirkoswald. See how many you can find!

Produced by Kirkoswald Environment Group.

Suggested Donation: 50p

A Suggested Route....

1. Turn left as you leave Ravenbridge Stores; walk over the bridge and past the garage, then look at the wall just after it where there are cascades of Ivy-leaved Toadflax. Cross the road, and look at the dry-stone wall in front of the workshop, where there is tiny Rue-leaved Saxifrage, Whitlow Grass, and Herb Robert. Cross the road to look at the old high wall. There are some interesting stones in this lime-mortared wall, but few plants other than lichens.
2. Head back towards the village (unless you have time for a rewarding stroll down to the church), noticing the fine crop of non-native Aubretia growing on the sunny side of the bridge. (Feel free to turn sharp left just after the bridge, to explore the area known as Quebec where there is a lot of Hart's-tongue Fern.) When you arrive in the cobbled square, take the road past the Church Institute, looking out for Toadflax, Wall Rue and - surprisingly - Yew on the wall on the left! When you come across a large green sliding door, take a look at the roof of the building, where you will see a fine crop of Polypody.
3. Head back towards The Square, but take the first road to the left just before it. Halfway up the hill, take a close look at the wall of the disused chapel where you will find an excellent range of ferns, including: Hart's-tongue, Wall Rue, Maidenhair and Black Spleenwort, and Male Fern.
4. Continue up the hill to the crossroads, and follow the road up the next hill towards the school. Go past the houses on your left, then look closely at the wall with the field behind it. Here you will find some good flowering plants, including: Common and Bush Vetch, Yarrow, Marjoram, Ox-eye Daisy, and Mouse-ear Hawkweed.
5. Turn around and head back towards The Square, noting the attractive Shining Cranesbill growing on the wall on the right towards the top of the hill, just past the corner.
6. Just before Ravenbridge Stores, turn left and look out for yet more Toadflax and Herb Robert.

NB: Not all villagers appreciate plants on walls. From time to time, plants are pulled out or sprayed with herbicide, so might no longer be visible. In addition, not all plants are visible at all times during Spring and Summer. Plants illustrated in this leaflet are usually visible by late May.

Some Flowering Plants

Lesser Trefoil



Herb Robert



Rue-leaved Saxifrage



Ox-eye Daisy



Mouse-ear Hawkweed

Ivy-leaved Toadflax



Whitlow Grass

Some Ferns



Wall Rue



Maidenhair



Polypody



Hart's-tongue