

COUNTRY DIARY

THE shallow margins of the upper reaches of the river Wear are full of darting shoals of young trout in late spring and early summer. Search the stony edges of the river and you may find some of the insects that these fish are looking for.

Some of the stones carry empty cases of stonefly nymphs, identifiable by their two long filamentous tails. When these larval stages are fully fed they climb onto rocks and then begin to split open along their backs. The insect that climbs out is about an inch long, with a flattened appearance and wings that are folded lengthways along its body. Stoneflies are reluctant to fly and scurry around on the riverside rocks and water surface – making them relatively easy prey for fish. They only breed in clean, well oxygenated, fast flowing water so their presence is a good indication of a healthy river.

The most conspicuous riverside insects are mayflies which, despite their name, occur throughout spring and summer. Stoneflies emerge as fully formed adults but mayflies undergo a final moult after they emerge as winged insects from their nymphs. Anglers refer the first winged form to emerge as a dun and this moults into the insect that they call a spinner, which can then lay eggs in the shallows and begin the next generation. Mayflies hold their wings vertically and can have two or three long tails. They emerge in vast numbers and the adult life of individuals lasts for a few hours and often for just a few minutes. One characteristic sound of a sunny afternoon along the river is the splash of large trout leaping from the water, catching mayfly spinners that flutter just above the surface. **Phil Gates**

BIRDWATCH

ANOTHER marshbird has taken centre stage in the North-East but unlike last week's star – East Yorkshire's purple heron, which hasn't been seen since the 20th – this one is tiny.

While it's quite normal for the sparrow-sized Temminck's stint to call here in May, more than usual have been reported, mostly since Saturday, with the majority in East Yorkshire, (three at both Beacon Ponds, near Kilnsea, and Watton reserve near Beverley) and Northumberland (three south of Beadnell and singles at Beehive Flash, Earsdon and Woodhorn Flash, near Newbiggin).

Teasmouth started the sequence when one overflown Saltholme reserve on the 16th, but there were no more sightings until two on floodwater at nearby Port Clarence on Tuesday. Considering the current weather – lower temperatures after the recent brief warm spell and the wind in a northerly quarter – there could be further appearances.

Southern Norway's Hardangervidda, a vast plateau more than 3,000ft above sea level, is the species' nearest major nesting ground. It could well be still under snow so by taking this break in their long migration from central Africa, they're improving the chances of conditions being just right when they set off on the final leg across the North Sea.

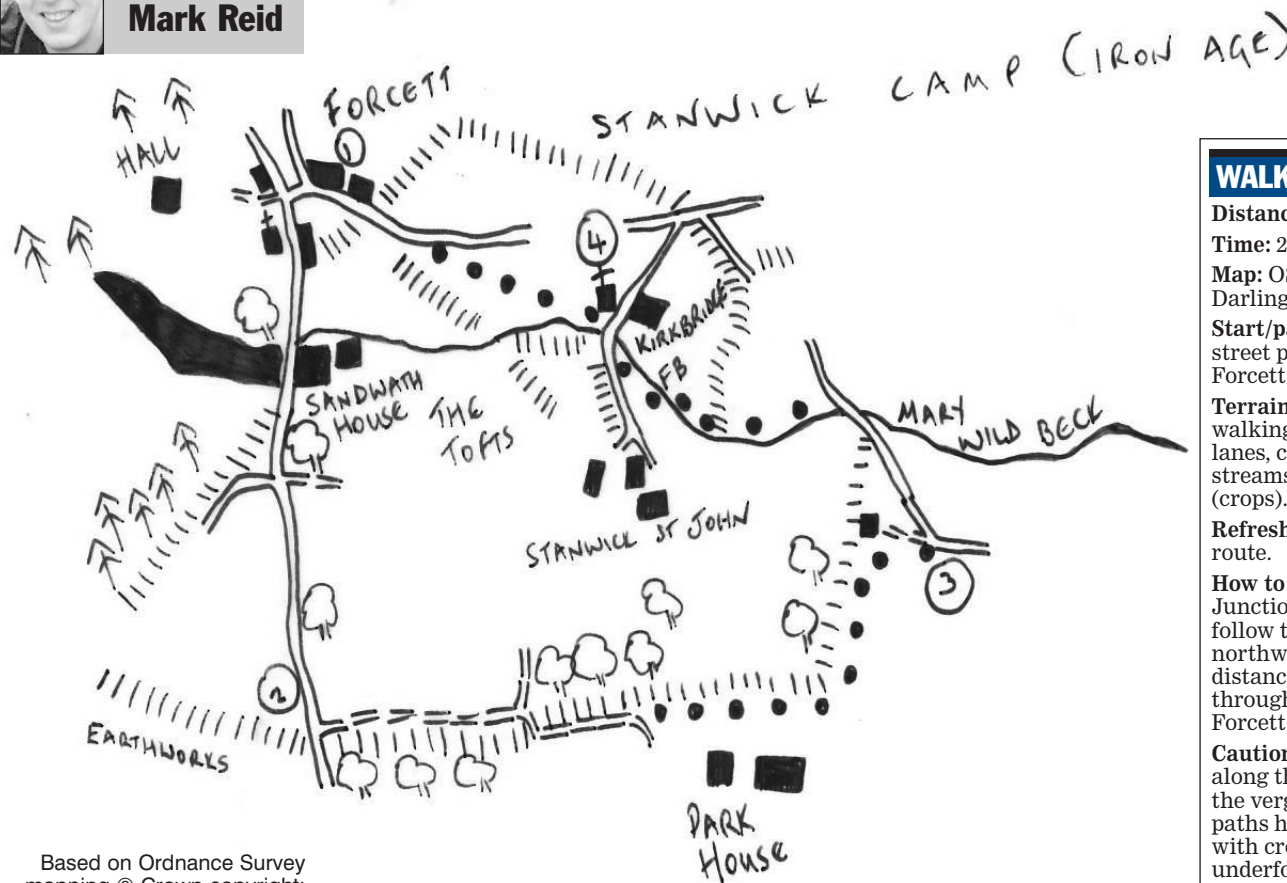
Meanwhile, there's been a mini-influx of some of the scarce songbird migrants that make May special. Spurn scored most, with two bluethroats, an icterine warbler, a golden oriole and two red-backed shrikes since Saturday. Further red-backed shrikes were well inland at Carlton and North Duffield Carrs near Selby, and one much further north at Blackhall Rocks on the Durham coast. A nightjar on Hartlepool Headland and a common rosefinch at Howick, Northumberland, added yet more variety.

A Montagu's harrier at Bank Island in Yorkshire's Lower Derwent valley, a crane in Northumberland's Cresswell/Widdrington Station area and four dotterel on Great Whernside in the Yorkshire Dales were among other highlights. **Brian Unwin**

WALKS



By
Mark Reid



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POINTS OF INTEREST

STEP back in time along this walk through Stanwick Camp, a journey that will take you back 2,000 years to a time before the Romans when this country was ruled by Celtic tribes. Stanwick Camp was the last stronghold of the Brigantes, and is a place where layers of history lie all around the landscape; it is a thought-provoking place.

Before the Romans, this country was ruled by regional Iron Age chieftains. The North of England was in the hands of the Brigantes, an alliance of Celtic tribes who collectively were the most powerful of the Celtic tribes at the time of the Roman invasion of Britain in 43AD. They were well organised and technologically advanced with organised farming, mining and trading; indeed the Brigantes exploited the lead reserves of the North Pennines, which they then sold to the Roman Empire.

This walk explores Stanwick Camp, the largest Iron Age fort in the country with deep ditches and earthworks stretching for over 4 miles enclosing an area of some 750 acres. This was the political and economic stronghold of the Brigantes, possibly even the seat of their kings and queens. At the heart of Stanwick Camp are the remains of the original Iron Age hill fort known as The Tofts, which was enlarged and extended in response to the threat from the advancing Roman legions during the first century AD to create the vast earthworks we see today. When it was constructed there were deep ditches cut down into the bedrock with stone walls some 16-ft high – the name Stanwick comes from the old Viking words meaning 'stone walls'. This impressive defensive structure was built under the orders of Venutius, the husband of the Brigantes Queen Cartimandua, who had quarrelled with his pro-Roman wife and subsequently went off to stir up anti-Roman

resistance. This provoked the Roman legions into action and they embarked on a long and bloody military campaign to quell the troublesome tribes of Northern Britain that culminated in the capture of Stanwick and defeat of the British tribes, although resistance continued throughout the Roman occupation. A small section of the earthworks near the hamlet of Forcett were excavated during the early 1950s and are now in the care of English Heritage, where you can see the deep ditch and stone wall.

The Church of St John the Baptist stands at the heart of Stanwick Camp, a surprisingly large church for such a small hamlet. All around are the ramparts and earthworks of the Camp. There has been a place of worship here since at least Saxon times perhaps earlier as the circular churchyard suggests that its origins may be pagan; the church stands just outside the Tofts area of Stanwick Camp and so may have been a religious site of the Brigantes. The present church dates mainly from the 13th Century, although it was restored during the 19th Century. Inside the church you will find an intricately carved Viking Ring Cross, thought to date from the time when Stanwick lay just inside the northern boundary of the Danelaw during the 10th Century, as well as several Saxon cross-heads and tomb covers set into the walls. There are also several interesting stone effigies and memorials to the local Catterick family who held the Manor of Stanwick during the Middle Ages. The name of the family later changed through marriage to Smithson, and several generations later they inherited the Earldom of Northumberland when a Smithson married Elizabeth Percy.

THE WALK

1 From the road junction in the centre of Forcett, follow the road towards East Layton, Richmond to quickly reach a T-

junction (with the entrance gates of Forcett Hall ahead of you). Turn left here and follow the road (take care – walk on the wide verges) for 1.75 km passing St Cuthbert's Church, then Sandwath House and adjoining riding stables and on passing the turning for East Layton to eventually reach a clear concrete track to the left alongside some extensive and very obvious wooded earthworks that run across your path on either side of the road.

2 Turn left along this concrete track (which quickly becomes a clear stony track) and follow this straight on with the earthworks on your right and fields to your left for 700 metres to reach a T-junction of tracks (woodland in front of you). Turn right along the clear track, which cuts through the line of the wooded earthwork, immediately after which head left along the clear track alongside a stone wall with the earthworks now on your left. Continue along this clear track alongside the wall/earthworks for 400 metres then, where the clear track bends sharp right (with the large Park House Farm ahead across to your right), carry straight on across the field along the edge of the field/earthwork (no clear path). Head straight on along the field edge alongside the wall/earthwork on your left for 500 metres then, as you reach the end of this ploughed field, head straight on through the overgrown hedgerow/trees just after which follow this wall and earthwork as they bend sharply round to the left to emerge out onto another field. Carry straight on across this next field with the wall/earthwork on your left for 500 metres to reach a wire fence across your path. Turn right alongside this fence then, where this fence joins a hedge, carry straight on for a few paces to reach a stile to your left that leads onto a road at a road junction (signpost).

3 Turn left along the road (ignore the driveway to your

left) and follow this gently down to reach Mary Wild Bridge across Mary Wild Beck (earthworks just to your left). Cross the bridge then continue along the road for 50 metres then cross the wall-stile to your left just before a gate (signpost). After the stile, head straight on alongside Mary Wild Beck on your left for 600 metres to reach a gate across your path (with some large earthworks on your right and the stream to your left). Head through the gate and continue on with the stream still on your left (heading towards the church tower in the distance) then, half way across this field, cross the bridge over the stream to your left and then turn right with the stream now on your right (still heading towards the church tower) and follow this stream to join the road beside Kirk Bridge.

4 Turn right over the bridge then immediately branch off to the left into the churchyard of St John the Baptist. Follow the path to reach the entrance porch of the church where you follow the tarmac path to the left then, where this path bends to the right around the tower, head straight on along the grassy path passing between the yew trees/gravestones to quickly reach a stile over the boundary wall. After the stile, walk up alongside the fence/hedge on your right (boggy ground) for 125 metres then, where this hedge/fence bends slightly to the left, cross the stile to the right through this hedge. After this stile, head straight on alongside the field boundary on your right then follow this field boundary bending left (with a road on the other side of the hedge) and follow this for 250 metres then, just before a large solitary tree, head right over a stile in this hedge that leads onto the road. Turn left along the road back into Forcett.

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innway.co.uk

■ While every effort is made to ensure that walks are accessible and are rights of way, The Northern Echo cannot guarantee that fields, paths or pubs will be open. If you are walking in the countryside, please remember the Country Code.
www.northernecho.co.uk/leisure/walks

WALKFACTS

Distance: 6.5 km (4 miles)

Time: 2 hours

Map: OS Explorer Sheet 304 Darlington & Richmond

Start/parking: Limited on-street parking throughout Forcett

Terrain: A mixture of road walking along country lanes, clear tracks, streamside and field paths (crops).

Refreshments: None en route.

How to get there: From Junction 56 on the A1(M), follow the B6275 northwards for a short distance then turn off through Melsonby to reach Forcett.

Caution: Take care walking along the roads – walk on the verges. Some of the paths head across fields with crops and are rough underfoot.