

COUNTRY DIARY

WITH so many hungry mouths to feed, birds that are raising nestlings are constantly on the lookout for food items, making life hazardous for small insects.

Some insects, like the small looper caterpillars that feed on tree foliage, depend on camouflage to escape the attentions of predators. When they're threatened these little caterpillars rear up and 'freeze', keeping perfectly still in the hope that they'll be mistaken for an inanimate twig. If that ruse fails, their last resort is to drop from the branch and dangle on a silken thread, out of harm's way.

If click beetles are disturbed they become completely rigid, tucking their legs under their body, and then they roll onto their backs, feet in the air. In this position they 'play possum', feigning death, with their body slightly arched. They stay like this for about half a minute, but all the while they're preparing their escape. There's a peg that forms a frictional link between the insect's segments and as it flexes its muscles tension develops until the peg suddenly slips and the beetle straightens itself with explosive force, somersaulting into the air and away to safety. It's a strategy that's guaranteed to bewilder a predator. Many weevils also 'play possum' as a way of escaping the attentions of birds, dropping to the ground and staying perfectly still until the threat has passed, then scuttling away to safety.

Some moths use a more brazen strategy for survival. The small yellow underwing moth is a nondescript insect with dull coloured wings, relying on its dowdy colours for camouflage during the daylight hours, but if it's disturbed it shuffles its forewings, revealing a flash of brilliant orange scales on its underwings – which sometimes provide just enough distraction to allow it to escape from a hungry bird.

Phil Gates

BIRDWATCH

WITH attention on European football in midweek my mind drifts back to May, 1985 when Everton triumphed in the Cup-winners Final – and little migrants with chests the same colour as that team's shirts dominated the bird news.

Underlining how the colour connection was just a remarkable coincidence then, bluethroats have also been prominent in the build-up to red-shirted Manchester United's Champion's League Final. On the other hand, they are, of course, of the species' red-spotted race, so for superstitious-minded football fans maybe there is an element of augury after all.

Well no, actually it's just that bluethroats tend to be heading for their Scandinavian breeding territory around the same time as the climax of the European football season so, given the limited colour range of strips, in some years the most dazzling plumage features of the male birds are bound to be of the same hue as the team at the centre of attention.

One big difference between 1985's bluethroat influx and this year's is the distribution of the birds. 24 years ago many appeared in the North-East – including around 20 in the Whitburn/Marsden area of South Tyneside alone. This month more than 60 have been recorded nationally but only four of them have occurred in our region, all in Northumberland – two on Holy Island, one on the Farnes and the only mainland bird at Newbiggin. The rest have been in Scotland, almost all on islands, especially Orkney and Shetland, including 15-plus on remote Fair Isle lying in between those archipelagos.

Otherwise, the scene from North Yorkshire to the Scottish border can be summed up as a few garganey, spoonbills, marsh harriers and ospreys, plus a crane over Nosterfield near Masham, and the great white egret's continued Teesmouth stay. Fortunately, with our migration season extending into June, there's still time for some bigger thrills. **Brian Unwin**

WALKS



By
Mark Reid

POINTS OF INTEREST

DANBY Rigg rises up as a narrow ridge of heather moorland between the valleys of Little Fryup Dale and

Danby Dale, both of which feed into the larger Esk Dale. Thousands of years ago during the Bronze Age when the climate was both warmer and drier, this ridge was an ideal place for the early settlers of the North York Moors to establish their small settlements. This high ridge provided safety away from the forests and swamps that would have choked the valleys, not to mention the wild animals that lurked within. For thousands of years, these Bronze Age and then Iron Age peoples lived their lives for generations on this high ridge, building farmsteads, clearing fields, burying their dead and worshipping the passage of the sun, moon and stars across the sky. Then, around the time of the Roman invasion of Britain, the climate became colder and wetter and so the Iron Age farmers moved from the high ground into the more sheltered valleys. The uplands gradually turned into peat moorland and their remains became preserved within the landscape. Danby Rigg has one of the greatest concentrations of Bronze and Iron Age remains in the country with over 800 cairns, earthworks, double and single dykes, enclosures, settlements and field systems, and a stone circle of which only one massive standing stone remains, all of which date back some 3,000 years. This is an amazing place to explore with history all around, a history that dates back thousands of years to the dawn of human existence in this country.

The path across the fairly narrow Danby Rigg leads, rather unexpectedly to the escarpment above Little Fryup Dale and one of the finest viewpoints in the North York Moors. The exquisitely named Little Fryup Dale has nothing to do with the breakfast fare at local B&Bs but is derived from the Old English personal name Friga and up meaning valley. There is an equally impressive view on the west side of Danby Rigg overlooking the broader valley of Danby Dale.

THE WALK

1 From the Fox & Hounds at Ainthorpe (with your back to the pub) turn left along the road and follow it rising up out of the village and passing some tennis courts (Danby Tennis Club) just beyond which, as the road bends round to the left, take the bridleway off to the right (signpost Public Bridleway). Follow the clear, sunken path straight on up through gorse bushes for 300 metres to reach a gate in a fence across your path (open moorland ahead). Head through the gate and follow the clear sunken path straight on gently rising up across Danby Rigg (moorland), passing a large prehistoric standing stone after 500 metres then continue straight on for a further 600 metres to reach the escarpment overlooking Little Fryup Dale and a fork in the path (waymarker).

2 Follow the right-hand fork which heads along the top of

Prehistoric

Danby Rigg

WALKFACTS

Distance: 7.5 km (4.75 miles)

Time: 2-3 hours

Steps taken: 10,107 steps (pedometer)

Maps: OS Explorer OL 26 - always take a map on your walk.

Start/Parking: Roadside parking just down from the Fox & Hounds at Ainthorpe (Brook Lane).

Refreshments: Pub at Ainthorpe. No facilities en route.

Terrain: Moorland paths and tracks all the way, with some road walking at the start and finish. Some of the moorland paths are rough and boggy underfoot. There are also steep drops to the side of the path above Danby Dale (Rakes Way).

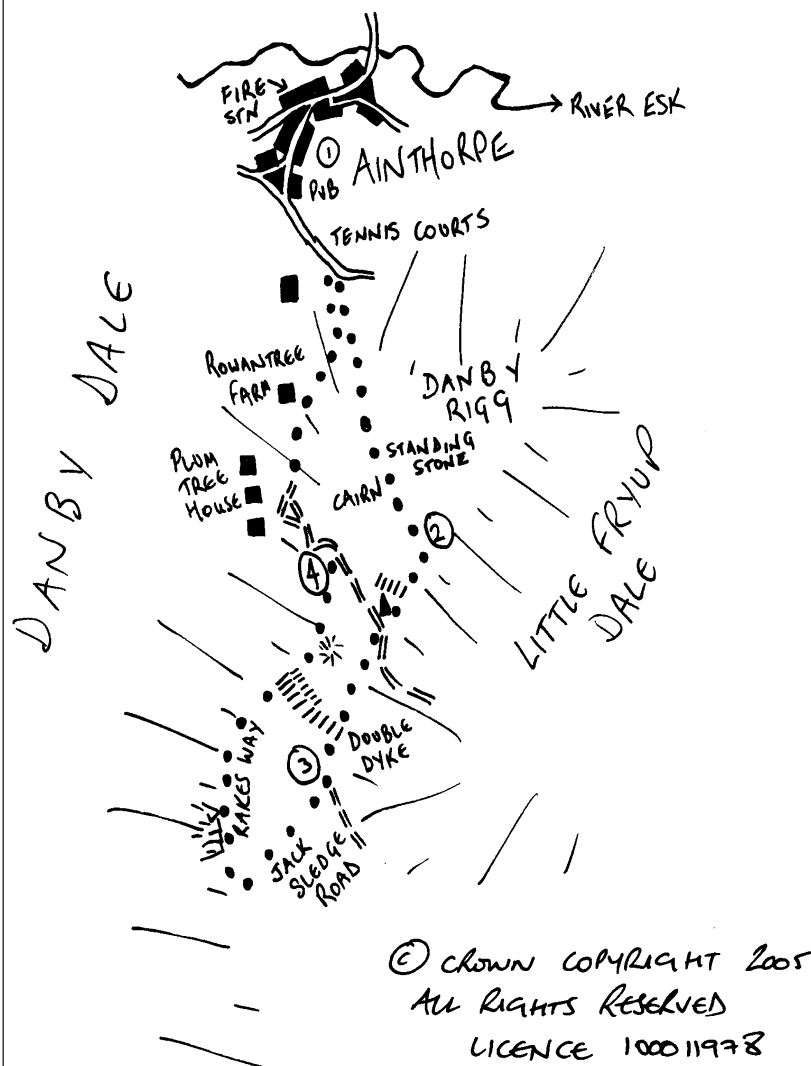
How to get there: From the A171 Whitby to Guisborough road, a minor road leads south down to reach Danby, from where you head south of the River Esk and up into Ainthorpe. Branch left at the Fire Station to reach the Fox & Hounds.

Open Access Land: This walk follows paths across Open Access Land. NB: Dogs are not permitted on this Open Access Land.

Caution: This walk follows paths and tracks across the open moorland of Danby Rigg. Navigation may be difficult in poor weather – take an OS map with you on your walk.

the escarpment (Little Fryup Dale falling away to your left) and follow this for 400 metres to reach a clear track across your path near a Trig Point. Cross over this track and continue along the narrow path along the top of the escarpment (Little Fryup Dale down to your left) for a further 500 metres to reach the prehistoric ditch of Double Dyke and a stoutly-built grouse butt. Carry straight on along the narrow path along the edge of the escarpment (head of Little Fryup Dale down to your left) for about 200 metres (path becomes a rough grassy track) to reach crossroads of paths (small cairn).

3 Turn right and follow the path gently rising up across the moorland (Jack Sledge Road) onto the top of Danby Rigg to soon reach a sizeable cairn overlooking Danby Dale in front of you. Follow the path gently dropping down then, as you reach the steep escarpment above Danby Dale (with the houses of Botton below), you come to a fork in the path where you head to the right down along a sunken path for a short distance to reach the top of the steep escarpment where you head off to the right along a narrow path following the edge of this escarpment (do not follow the sunken path down into Danby Dale). Follow this path straight on (Rakes Way) to soon reach some



gritstone outcrops (great viewpoint) where you carry straight on along the narrow path, with the edge of the escarpment to your left, for 0.75 km (path indistinct in places) to reach a line of grouse butts across your path (walk to the grouse butt on the left closest to the edge of the escarpment). From the grouse butt, continue straight on along the narrow path (edge of the escarpment just across to your left) to soon reach Double Dyke (prehistoric ditch and bank). Carry straight on along the narrow path ahead (still with the edge of the escarpment to your left) for 600 metres to reach a clear track across your path marked by a line of boundary stones (join the track beside the left-hand boundary stone closest to the escarpment above Danby Dale).

4 Turn left along the track and follow it down the escarpment into Danby Dale bending quite sharply to the right slanting down the hillside then, where the track curves round to the left at the foot of the steep escarpment, you come to a fork where you branch off to the right along a wide grassy path heading down across the hillside (towards the small lake in the distance) to reach a grassy trackway across your path just before a wall (with the scattered group of houses just across to your left). Turn right

along this grassy trackway and follow it to quickly join the stone wall on your left. Continue straight on alongside this wall on your left heading along the foot of the steep escarpment. Where the wall turns down to the left after 300 metres towards Rowantree Farm, carry straight on along the path across the hillside (foot of the escarpment) to soon re-join this wall which you follow straight on to reach a gate in a fence across your path. Head through the gate and follow the clear path straight on meandering through gorse bushes to re-join the road near Danby Tennis Club. Turn left along the road back down into Ainthorpe.

Mark Reid
Author of The Inn Way series
innway.co.uk

NAVIGATION SKILLS WEEKENDS
Do you want to learn new outdoor skills, feel more confident in the outdoors, plan your own walks or learn how to use a compass? Mark Reid now offers weekend navigation courses in the Yorkshire Dales (National Navigation Award Scheme bronze level).

teamwalking.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