

COUNTRY DIARY

BUDDLEIA, often known as 'butterfly bush' because it's so attractive to these insects, is common in gardens and waste places in towns and cities – and will soon be flowering. Butterflies become so absorbed in feeding on its rich supply of nectar that it's often possible to view red admirals, small tortoiseshells, peacocks and comma butterflies at very close quarters without disturbing them.

If you take a close look at the underside of a comma's wing when it's feeding on buddleia you'll see the small white, curled mark that gives this species its common name. The outspread wings of the sunbathing butterfly are brilliant orange, laced with brown and black markings, but when they close it displays one of the finest examples in nature of the art of camouflage. The folded wings' colour and scalloped edges are an almost perfect match for dead leaves. This instant contrast between dull camouflage and vivid colour may also have defensive value, because it must be bewildering to bird predators.

The comma went into drastic decline in the early 1900s, when there were fears that it might go extinct, but by the end of the 20th Century it made a sensational comeback. It's now common in our region again and its range is still expanding. No one is sure why this recovery has taken place but one possibility is that the original race, whose caterpillars fed on hops, has been replaced with a new one that breeds on stinging nettles, which are common everywhere. Comma butterflies produce two generations each year, in July and in autumn, with two colour forms in the July emergence. Larger, darker-winged individuals are long-lived and hibernated over winter, mating and laying eggs in the following spring. Paler-winged individuals mate immediately and their offspring will appear as adults in autumn.

Phil Gates

BIRDWATCH

AFTER a sustained run of warm weather it's tempting to wonder if birds have concluded that Britain is an ideal place for a summer break.

Nationally, the current star avian tourist is the white-tailed lapwing that should be in Central Asia but has been in Kent since Sunday after initially turning up on Merseyside in late May (assuming it's the same individual), then appearing on London's fringe last week, before spending two days in Gloucestershire.

Our region's most offbeat visitor is the king eider off Filey Brigg since at least Friday. It appears to like the Yorkshire coast, being presumably the same immature male seen passing Flamborough Head on the 2nd. Our seaside must seem positively tropical to an Arctic species that does stray fairly regularly to the UK – but normally in winter and usually no further south than Scotland.

Meanwhile, an alpine swift, a southern Europe breeder, was at Spurn, Humberside, on Sunday. It occurred during a movement of 3,000 common swifts, an impressive count but only a fraction of the 21,000 that passed the headland the previous Sunday.

East Chevington, the wetland reserve in Northumberland's Druridge Bay, followed-up its jackpot-hitting bridled tern of June 20 with a great white egret and then three spoonbills last week. Little egrets have ventured into Northumberland also, with reports of one to three in eight locations from the Tyne west of Newcastle to Budle Bay, near Bamburgh. Teesmouth remains our main centre for this colonising species, however, with up to eleven recently.

Incidentally, the dotterel that – surprisingly – visited Crimdon on July 4 was still there on the 7th and remained until at least Saturday, delighting numerous birders. There was weekend joy, too, at Whitburn when two Leach's storm-petrels were fitted with rings then released after being lured to shore by the nocturnal playing of tapes of the species' weird calls.

Brian Unwin

WALKS



By
Mark Reid

POINTS OF INTEREST

THIS is one of the best pub walks in the Yorkshire Dales, with a variety of scenery, terrain and history along the way. Make sure you call into St Andrew's Church to see the famous Jervaulx Abbey screen, savour the views from Aysgarth Pasture and Forelands Rigg, see the dramatic Aysgarth Upper Falls from Yore Bridge and then finish off with a drink overlooking the village green at the Fox and Hounds at West Burton.

THE WALK

1 From the Fox & Hounds at West Burton (with your back to the pub), turn left along the road and follow this road down passing the Post Office/shop and out of the green. Continue down along the road through the village then, as the road bends to the right, take the footpath to the left through a gate in between Lenny Garth Barn and The Reading Room (opposite Meadow Croft), marked by a signpost Footpath to road for Eshington Bridge. Follow this path down to reach the main road. Cross over the road (take care) and take the footpath opposite to the right (signpost Eshington Bridge) through a small gate beside a field gate and down some steps, after which head straight across the field and through a gateway to the left of a barn then on across the next field and through a squeeze-stile in the far right-hand corner of the field (beside Bishopdale Beck), then straight on to quickly reach another squeeze-stile. After these stiles, turn right and follow the path straight across two fields to reach a road just to the right of Eshington Bridge.

2 Turn left along the road over the bridge and follow the road bending round to the right then, almost immediately, take the footpath to the left (beside the large tree – signpost Palmer Flatts). Head straight up across the field to another stile just behind the telegraph pole, after which head right through a wall-gate then head on to join the wall opposite and follow this up to the left and through a small wooden gate. After this gate head on to join the wall opposite which you follow to the left down into a small steep-sided valley then straight up through a wall-gate then straight on to reach the A684 main road. Cross over the road (take care) and follow the enclosed path straight on down to reach St Andrews Church. As you reach the church tower, turn left along the path through the churchyard to reach the churchyard entrance gates and the road. Cross over the road and take the footpath opposite through a squeeze-stile (signpost Aysgarth village), after which follow the path straight on across several fields through a series of squeeze-stiles for 0.5 km to eventually join an enclosed path. Follow this enclosed path straight on to quickly reach a stile to the right at the end of the enclosed path, after which head down to reach a gate to the left of the whitewashed house (Field House) that leads onto a lane. Follow this lane bending to the left up into Aysgarth then, where the lane forks at the Methodist Church, follow the right-hand lane straight on to reach the main road beside the Memorial Lamp.

3 Head straight on along the main road through the village (cross over to the left side of the road just after the tea rooms to avoid the blind bend ahead) then, where the main road bends sharply down to the right at the top end of the village, take the turning straight on to the left (road-sign Thornton

WALKFACTS

Distance: 9.5 km (6 miles)

Time: Allow 3 hours

Map: OS Explorer Sheet OL30 – always carry a map with you

Parking: West Burton village green

Refreshments: Pubs at West Burton, Aysgarth and Thoraby.

Terrain: Field paths lead to Aysgarth, from where a stony track (Folly Lane) leads across Aysgarth Pasture to join the walled stony track of Stake Road which leads steeply down into Thoraby. After a short section of road-walking, field paths lead up onto Forelands Rigg, with some rough terrain and a stream crossing, before dropping back down to West Burton.

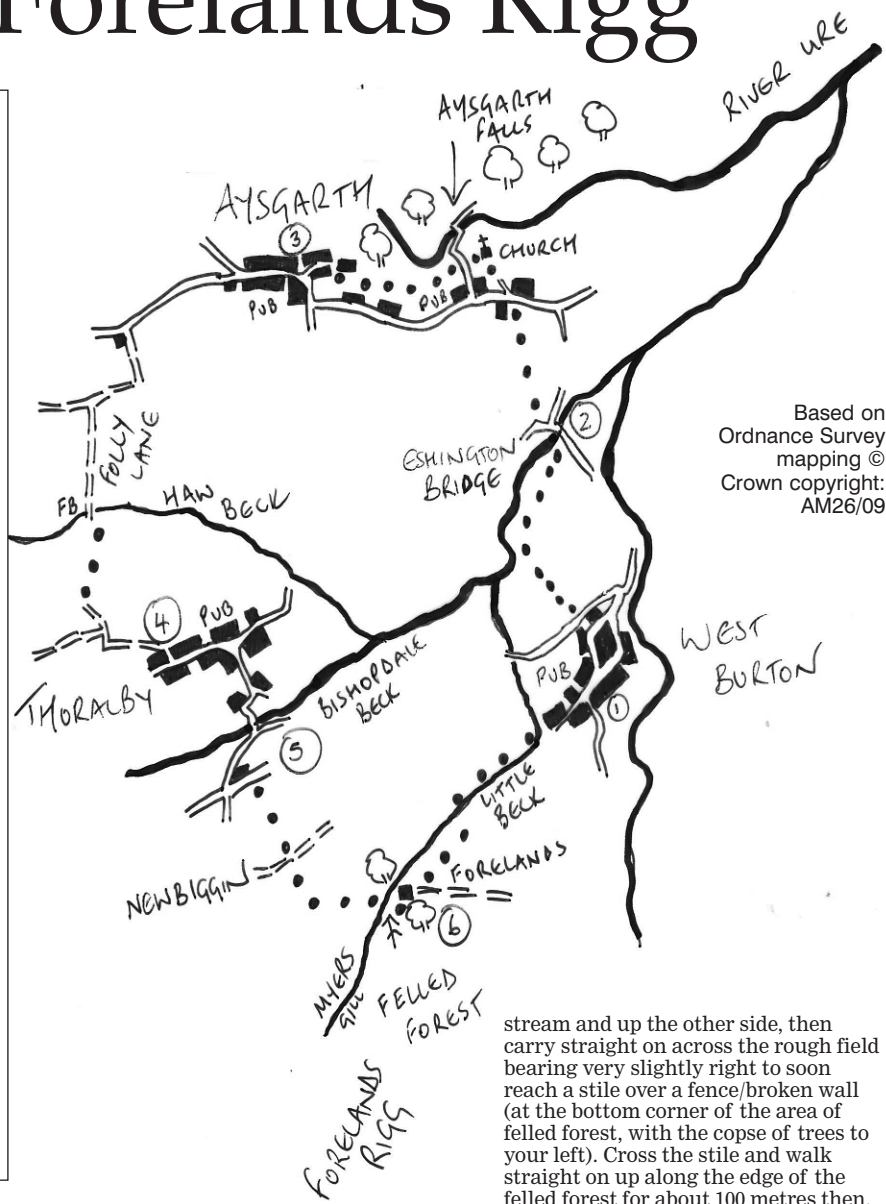
How to get there: From the A684 near Aysgarth Falls, follow the B6160 to reach West Burton

Caution: The descent from Folly Lane into Thoraby is quite steep along a rough, stony track. Take care walking along the road around Thoraby and also crossing the B6160 near Newbiggin and West Burton as well as the A684 at Aysgarth.

Rust). Follow this road out of Aysgarth then, after about 0.75 km, take the walled stony track to the left just before a large windowless stone barn on the corner (signpost Thoraby, Gayle Ing). Follow this track rising up then levelling out and bending sharp right then, where the track forks, follow the left-hand track (signpost Thoraby). Follow this walled track (Folly Lane) rising up at first – the track soon levels out and leads straight on passing a barn on your right before dropping down to reach a gate at the end of the walled track just beyond a ford/footbridge. After this gate head to the left climbing quite steeply up across the field, keeping close to the wall on your left, to reach a small gate in a fence at the top of the steep bank in the top left-hand corner of the field (signpost), after which head diagonally to the right across the field (waymarkers) to reach a gate in a wall (signpost) at the top of a stony track. Head through the gate and follow the track dropping steeply down, through another gate that leads onto a walled, stony track on a sharp bend. Follow this stony track straight on winding steeply down to reach the road at Thoraby beside Town Head Farm.

4 Turn left along the road to reach the George Inn. Just after the pub, take the road turning to the right passing the old Methodist Chapel on the corner and follow this road straight on down out of the village, bending round to the right (ignore the lane that branches off to the left just before this right bend) then left down to reach the Old Corn Mill and a road-bridge across Bishopdale Beck. After the bridge, follow the road to the right (signpost Kettlewell) up to the crossroads

West Burton and Forelands Rigg



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with the main road beside the Bunkhouse.

5 At the road junction turn left along the B6160 (take care) for 50 metres then, just before the road begins to rise up, turn right along a track and through a squeeze-stile in a wall that leads out onto a field (signpost). Head straight up the field, keeping close to the small stream/overgrown hedge on your right, to reach a small wall-gate in the top right-hand corner of the field (just to the right of a barn). After the wall-gate, head straight up the small field (passing to the right of the barn) and through another wall-gate, after which carry straight on up across the field bearing very slightly to the right passing a barn across to your right at first and then passing through the line of large trees in the middle of the field (just by a small section of wall) to reach another small wall-gate at the top of the field that leads onto an enclosed track. At the track, head straight over through the small wall-gate directly opposite (just to the left of a red metal gate), after which walk straight on up the hillside (ignore grassy path to the left) to quickly pick up a fence/wall/hedge on your right and follow this climbing quite steeply up to reach a small wall-gate in the top right corner of the field. Head through this wall-gate and turn immediately left along a rough path heading up alongside this wall on your left to reach a small wall-gate across your path. Head through this wall-gate and walk straight on then, where the wall on your left bends away after a short distance (by an isolated wooden stile), carry straight on across the rough field to reach the brow of a steep bank above the small ravine of Myers Gill (signpost). Drop down over this

stream and up the other side, then carry straight on across the rough field bearing very slightly right to soon reach a stile over a fence/broken wall (at the bottom corner of the area of felled forest, with the copse of trees to your left). Cross the stile and walk straight on up along the edge of the felled forest for about 100 metres then, just before you reach the end of the woodland on your left, follow the way-marked path to the left through the dense trees to quickly reach a stile, then straight on to reach a gate that leads into the farmyard of Forelands.

6 Walk straight through the farmyard passing in front of the house and along the lane away from the house that leads through the farmyard gate, a short distance after which turn left along a path that quickly leads to a small gate in a fence. After the small gate, walk straight on down across the middle of the field to reach another small gate at the end of the field, after which bear left to quickly reach a wall-gate in the bottom of the field (signpost). After this wall-gate, head straight on bearing slightly right down across the steep hillside (aiming for the right-hand side of the roofless barn just ahead) to reach a small wall-gate at the bottom of the steep bank, after which walk straight on over Little Beck to quickly reach a junction of paths (signpost) just before the roofless barn. At the barn, turn right and follow the footpath straight on alongside Little Beck on your right through a number of wall-gates to reach a gate and small footbridge that leads into the farmyard of Town Head Farm at the top end of West Burton, where you head straight on down along the road back into West Burton.

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■ 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