

# Walks Scawton, Flassen Dale & Cold Kirby

## Walk information

**Distance:** 6.2 km /3.9 miles

**Time:** 2 hours

**Maps:** OS Explorer Sheet OL26 – always carry a map

**Parking:** On-street parking throughout Scawton – please park considerately.

**Refreshments:** Hare Inn at Scawton

**Terrain:** Country roads, field and woodland paths and tracks. Some of the woodland paths are slippery underfoot and overgrown – shorts not advised.

**How to get there:** Scawton lies along a minor road to the north of the A170 between Sutton Bank and Helmsley.

**Caution:** Take care walking along the road at the start of this walk – walk in single file and make yourself visible to traffic. This walk includes a number of quite steep ascents and descents; the path down into Flassen Dale is quite steep and slippery underfoot.

## Points of interest

SCAWTON lies on a shelf of land above Bradley Howl, indeed Scawton means 'farm in a hollow' in Old Norse. Howl, incidentally, is the local term for the small, deep valleys that can be found throughout the Tabular Hills. This quiet village is off the beaten track away from the tourist crowds, but this has not always been the case as the road through the village used to be a main road in medieval time known as Sperragate that connected Helmsley with the busy road of Hambleton Street via Rievaulx. It was developed by the monks to provide a quick route between Byland and Rievaulx abbeys as well as to their granges and the important trade routes.

It is said that the Hare Inn was built by the monks of either Rievaulx or Byland in the early 12th century to refresh travellers on this ancient road. Scawton's unique Norman church, dedicated to St Mary, has altered little since it was built by the monks of Byland Abbey in 1146, its age apparent from its irregular windows, bowing walls and characteristic zig-zag pattern in the stonework around the door. These monks had originally settled near Old Byland at what is now Tylas Farm, however they could hear the bells of Rievaulx a few miles down the valley so after four years they moved to Oldstead and then

finally settled at Byland Abbey where they built their magnificent church. It was while they were at Old Byland that they built this small church at Scawton.

It is thought that the font, altar stone and one of the bells may have been brought to the church from Old Byland making the bell one of the oldest in the country.

The Hambleton Hills are dissected by an intricate web of deep, steep-sided valleys cloaked in woodland with sparkling streams fed by countless springs trickling along the valley floors. These valleys feed into Ryedale, and are a walkers' paradise. This walk explores two of them – Nettle Dale and Flassen Dale. Here you will find an abundance of wild flowers, birds, trees and solitude – as well as Britain's only poisonous snake, the adder.

Cold Kirby has an exposed location high on the plateau of the Hambleton Hills from where there are far-reaching views towards the Vale of Pickering. The layout of this linear village has changed little since medieval times with cottages and farms lining the single street and narrow strip-fields running back from the village. St Michael's Church dates from the 12th century, although almost completely rebuilt in 1841, and was originally ministered by the Order of Knights Templars.

## The walk

**1.** From the small village green in the centre of Scawton, walk down along the main road through the village passing the church on your right and follow the road out of the village. Continue along the road gradually heading down (take care) for 700 metres then, where the road bends sharp right ('chevron' sign) head straight on off this bend along a farm track towards 'Stocking House Farm' then almost immediately branch off to the left down along a path into Spring Wood ('The Inn Way' signpost). Follow the clear path slanting down through the woods for 500 metres to emerge out into Nettle Dale, where you join a track at the bottom of the valley in a clearing. Head across the track (signpost Cleveland Way), over stepping stones across the stream and through a small gate then bear slightly left up a track to quickly reach a junction with a clearer, wide track (on a bend).

**2.** Head to the right (straight on)

along the clear track and follow this heading up into the steep-sided valley of Nettle Dale for 400 metres to reach a junction of track, where Flassen Dale meets Nettle Dale. Follow the left-hand track (signpost 'Cleveland Way') heading up through Flassen Dale (right-hand side of the valley with a narrow 'glade' along the flat valley floor) for 350 metres then, just after the third solitary tree in the middle of this narrow glade, you come to a junction of tracks. Head to the right up (signpost Cleveland Way) along a rough grassy track that climbs up through a narrow, wooded side-valley. Follow this track up to reach a gate. Head through the gate and continue up along the rough stony track to soon emerge from the trees and out onto flat fields. Follow this grassy track straight on alongside the fence on your left to soon reach a gate in the corner of the field and a much clearer track (Low Field Lane) – continue straight on along this very clear stony/sandy track for 1.1 km then, just after you have passed two large barns on your right (and the houses of Cold Kirby come into view just ahead to your right) and just before the track curves distinctly to the left, take the path off to the right (signpost Cleveland Way). Follow this path down into a shallow grassy valley then bear left along the clear path rising up to emerge onto a road by the village green in the centre of

Cold Kirby (red post box).

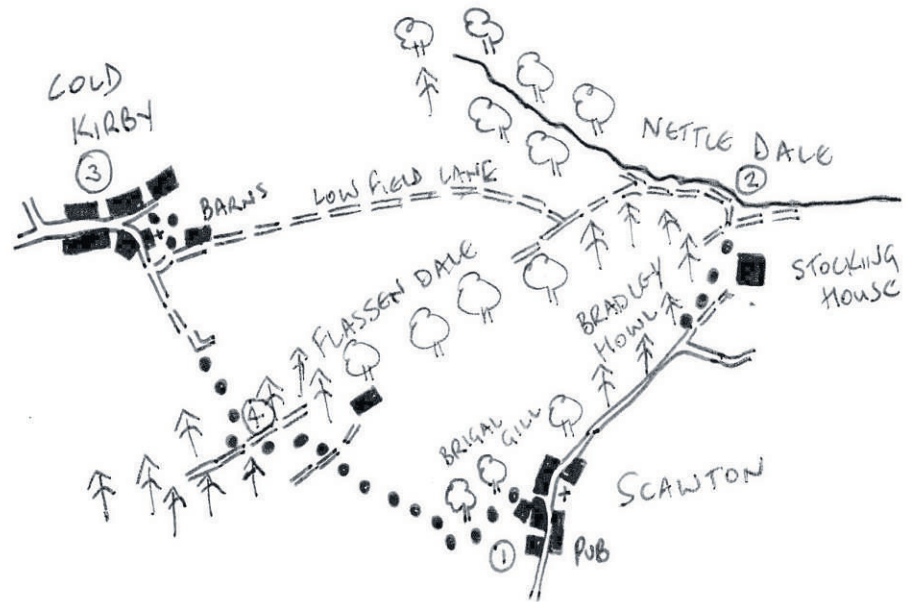
**3.** Turn left along this road passing the church on your left (The Inn Way signpost) and follow this road out of Cold Kirby (road becomes a track). Where the track forks after 150 metres (clearer track bends sharp left) follow the right-hand track straight on gently rising up at first heading across fields then levelling out (great views) then, where the track bends sharp left, carry straight on along the right-hand side of a hedge (signpost) across a field down to reach the top of the steep wooded slopes of Flassen Dale. Enter the woods and bear down to the right along a clear path for 25 metres to quickly reach a fork in the path (waymarker). Follow the left-hand narrow path (caution: slippery path; beware of rocks, mud and tree roots) slanting steeply down to reach a track along the valley bottom.

**4.** Turn left along this track then almost immediately turn right up along a clear path (signpost) that leads steeply through woodland to a stile to your right over a fence at the top of the hill. Cross the stile and head straight across the field and over a stile that leads onto a farm track. Cross the track and over another stile opposite then walk straight on across three fields

alongside the fence/hedge on your right to reach a stile beside a gate in the field corner just before the woodland of Brignal Gill in front of you. Head through this gate/stile then, keeping close to the fence/wooded valley on your left, follow the grassy track swinging sharply round to the left around the head of the wooded valley (do not follow the grassy track up through the valley) round to reach a stile over a fence. Cross this stile then bear to the right across the middle of the next field to reach a small gate in a fence (some distance to the left of the farm buildings), then bear right across the next field to reach another gate in the right hand corner of the field at the end of the large barn (waymarker), after which turn right across the next field and through a kissing gate (waymarker) that lead onto an enclosed path that brings you back out in the centre of Scawton.

**Mark Reid**  
Walking Weekends 2014  
Peak District, Yorkshire Dales,  
Lake District & Snowdonia  
[walkingweekenders.co.uk](http://walkingweekenders.co.uk)

Unique corporate activity days,  
navigation skills and team building  
experiences in the great outdoors.  
[teamwalking.co.uk](http://teamwalking.co.uk)



## Countrydiary By Phil Gates

**W**E TEND to think of moths as creatures of the twilight, but there are some colourful species that fly during the daylight hours.

Two of the most conspicuous are the cinnabar moth and the six-spot burnet. Both are marked with crimson and black on their wings, but in the cinnabar these colours on the forewings are in large patches whereas in the burnet moth the crimson markings are distinct spots. Cinnabar moths are most often found in coastal Northumberland, but there is now a well-established colony close to Durham city. Their caterpillars feed on ragwort, which is common everywhere, so there is every chance they will become more widespread. Six-spot burnet moth caterpillars feed on the very common bird's foot trefoil and begin to pupate at this time of year before emerging in July.

The most spectacular day-flying moth is the hummingbird hawk-moth, a large insect with brown forewings and bright orange

underwings that darts from flower to flower with incredible speed, extending its long tongue to collect nectar. It arrives in southern Britain from southern Europe and North Africa, sometimes in large numbers if there are favourable southerly winds. Some eventually find their way to the North East and you are most likely to see them feeding on the nectar rick flowers of buddleia and red valerian. In some Mediterranean countries that are considered to be bearers of good fortune. Legend has it that a small swarm was spotted in the English Channel, flying from France to England, as the invasion fleet approached the Normandy beaches on D-Day.



## Birdwatch By Ian Kerr

**J**UST when it seemed that late spring migrants was petering out along comes a couple of birds of such great rarity that each has been recorded only once previously in the region.

The first was black-winged pratincole, a member of the wader family with slim, long pointed wings and tern-like aerial grace. It winters in Africa and in spring moves northwards to breed in desert areas from the Middle East to Central Asia. The closely-related collared pratincole occurs around the Mediterranean and so is much more familiar to holidaying birders. Only around 40 black-winged pratincoles have been found in Britain so the discovery at Hauxley reserve at Druridge Bay was as totally unexpected as it was delightful for the lucky few present. It remained for around an hour before rising, circling high and moving off southwards, much to the disappointment of many others who raced to the spot, alerted by mobile phone and pager. Next day it turned up at RSPB

Saltholme, having presumably made its way southwards and un-noticed along the Durham coast to Cleveland. Again, frustratingly, it didn't linger long and flew off before many folk had the pleasure of seeing it. The only other occurrence involved an individual near Danby Wiske in North Yorkshire in August 1909. Like many other very rare visitors of that era it was shot as a trophy and ended up in the Dorman Museum, Middlesbrough.

The second mega rarity, a drake black scoter, turned up off Redcar on Monday with a flock of common scoter. The only previous regional record of this American visitor was a drake, again with common scoter, which frequented the Northumberland coast between Bamburgh and Goswick over a six-month period in 2011. The discovery of two great rarities in just five days emphasises the point that in bird-watching you never know what's going to turn up next. That, of course, is what makes it all so exciting.