



OXNOP GILL and IVELET BRIDGE

FROM MUKER 8½ MILES (13.7KM)

This spectacular walk explores the unspoiled side valley of Oxnop Gill. Route finding is easy, which should allow more time to enjoy the exceptional scenery.

The attractive village of Muker is situated at the foot of Kisdon Hill. Its clusters of grey stone cottages huddle together above the beck, which merges with the river Swale below the bridge to the east. Muker has several interesting buildings, including the old school endowed in 1678 and rebuilt in 1849, the literary institute of 1868 and the prominent St Mary's Church.

The church is one of the few to be built in England during the reign of Elizabeth I. It was originally founded as a chapel of ease under Grinton, but in 1580 it was significantly rebuilt and a graveyard was consecrated. This meant that the residents of Upper Swaledale no longer needed to take their dead all the way to the parish church at Grinton for burial. The church

was enlarged in 1761 with a higher roof and restored again in 1890 when the musicians' gallery was removed. The bells are thought to have been brought from Ellerton Priory after the Dissolution.

Muker still holds an annual show on the first Wednesday in September, at which some of the finest Swaledale tups and ewes are shown. Other events include sheepdog trials, dry-stone walling demonstrations, local craft and trade stalls, horse and pony events, vintage tractors, fell racing and much more.

Muker's Silver Band plays at the show throughout the day. The band was formed by subscription in 1897 to mark Queen Victoria's impending Diamond Jubilee. It is one of the last surviving bands in the northern dales, with a good majority of the players, whose ages range from ten to seventy, still hailing from within a few miles of the village. Since the 1970s the band's popularity has seen a revival

due to a number of television performances. These include shows such as *Go With Noakes*, *All Creatures Great and Small*, *Highway* and several appearances on *Dales Diary*.

The walk begins with a crossing of the steep hillside to the road above Crow Trees Farm. Although narrow, this road is fairly quiet and leads uphill above Oxnop Gill to Oxnop Scar

Oxnop Gill is a deeply cut side valley, the lower part being a fine example of a gill wood. These woods are the remains of former birch forests, once covering the upper fells stretching to the open moor. In contrast the upper gill has some attractive waterfalls and the magnificent outcrop of Oxnop Scar. Along the top of the scar there are splendid views to Kisdon Hill and the fells beyond.

From Oxnop Scar we descend along a tarmac lane passing Gill Head, a longhouse style farmhouse. These were built with a living area, a cow shed and a barn, all incorporated under one roof. Just below the farmhouse there is a beautiful panorama of the valley stretching from Muker to Gunnerside.

Directly opposite, above the hamlet of Ivelet, is Gunnerside Lodge which belongs to the American billionaire Robert Miller, whose Hong Kong-based financial empire grew from the sales of duty free drinks. Miller, who is now a British citizen, remains based in Hong Kong, but has homes in London, New York, Paris and Gstaad. He purchased the Gunnerside estate

for £9m in 1995. It is one of the largest country estates in Britain and covers an area of 32,000 acres (12,950Ha).

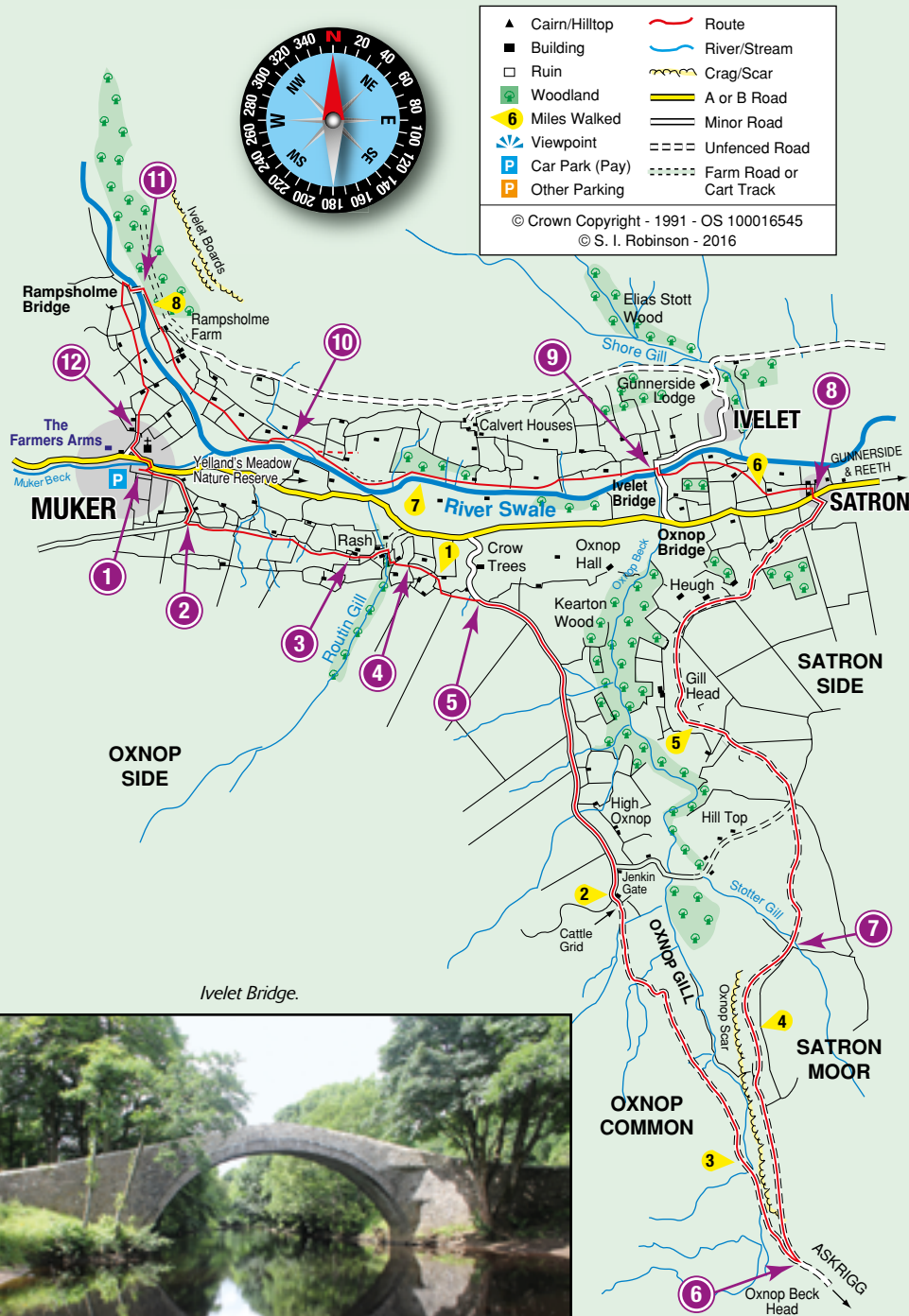
After reaching Satron we continue along a meadow path leading to the river Swale and the highlight of our walk. The splendid packhorse bridge at Ivelet, which has an attractive single-spanned high stone arch, was built in about 1695. The area around the bridge is so quiet that it is easy to imagine the packhorses laden with their heavy panniers crossing over the bridge and plodding their way along the peaceful, tree-shaded lane. According to local folklore, the locality around this ancient bridge is haunted by a headless dog which brings bad luck to anyone unfortunate enough to see it. The dubious canine is usually sighted gliding across the bridge, where it disappears over the edge.

From the bridge we follow a clear path through lush meadows, never straying far from the riverside and return to Muker. This is an area of outstanding natural beauty and is designated environmentally sensitive.

Across the river is the Yelland's Meadow Nature Reserve, belonging to the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust. This meadow is farmed by a local farmer using traditional methods and is free from artificial fertilisers. Hay meadows are seen at their best from the beginning of June to mid-July, when a profusion of wildflowers floods the valley with colour.

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| Start/Parking: | Muker, there is a good sized car park by the bridge at the eastern end of the village. |
| Location: | Muker is situated 9 miles (14.5km) to the west of Reeth on the B6270 Richmond to Kirkby Stephen road. |
| Grid Ref: | SE 911 978. Postcode: DL11 6QG. |
| Distance: | 8½ miles (13.7km) circular. Allow 4½ hrs walking time. |
| Total Ascent: | 1238 feet (377m) Maximum Elevation: 1615 feet (492m). |
| OS Maps: | Explorer OL30 (1:25,000) or Landranger 98 (1:50,000). |
| Refreshments: | Muker: The Farmer's Arms, The Muker Store and Tea Shop. |
| Public Toilets: | Muker: Situated opposite the Farmer's Arms. |
| Other: | Telephone, bus service. Swaledale Woollens, Muker Craft Shop. |

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- 1 **GR: 911 978** Leave the car park and take a track on the right (*SP Muker Common 1m*). Follow the track uphill, go through a gate and continue uphill to pass between two barns.
- 2 **GR: 912 976** Leave the lane via the second gate on the left and follow a narrow path close to the left wall. Go through a gate and an open gateway, continue to Rash Grange Farm.
- 3 **GR: 920 974** Pass through two gates to the right of the farm. Follow a farm lane, descending to cross a stone bridge over Routin Gill. Leave the lane via a gate on the right (*SP Footpath*) and follow a gravel drive leading up to the right of High Rash Cottage. Go through a gated stile behind the cottage and bear left to cross a wooden step stile.
- 4 **GR: 922 974** Continue beside the wall, cross a wooden step stile in the fence and pass through a gap stile on the left. Bear right at the barn (*SP Footpath*) and climb up to go through a gap stile in the top wall. Turn left and go through a gate/stile, bear right across the next field to a gap stile.
- 5 **GR: 925 972** Go through the stile, turn right and follow the road uphill for about 1 mile (1.6km). After crossing a cattle grid, the road becomes unfenced. Continue uphill for a further 1¼ miles (2km), passing above Oxnop Gill. During the ascent the road begins to get closer to Oxnop Scar. **CAUTION: this is a narrow road, with some sharp bends, dips and crests!**
- 6 **GR: 939 943** When the road reaches the top of the scar (*at a chevron road sign*) turn sharp left, doubling back onto a clear tarmac lane and head back along the top of Oxnop Scar. Continue through two gates and descend to cross Stotter Gill.
- 7 **GR: 939 957** From Stotter Gill, climb up slightly and then begin the long descent to the main road at Satron. Descend through two gates to reach Gill Head Farm. Continue descending via two more gates to the main road at Satron. **CAUTION: busy road!**
- 8 **GR: 940 977** Cross the road and go down the grassy lane opposite. Go through a gap stile on the left (*SP Ivelet Bridge*) and join a flagged path. Head towards the left of a barn and pass through a gap stile. Bear right and follow a clear path through three gap stiles descending to the riverbank. Continue upstream to Ivelet Bridge, turn right and follow the road over the bridge. **CAUTION: blind summit!**
- 9 **GR: 933 978** Leave the road via a gated stile on the left (*SP footpath Muker*). Follow a clear path crossing four meadows. Pass through a gate into a wood and follow a clear path above the beck. Leave the wood and descend to the riverbank (*broken wall on the right*). Go through a gap stile and continue to a signpost where the path merges with another from the right.
- 10 **GR: 917 979** Descend towards the riverbank and cross a step-stile in the left fence. Turn right, follow the fence and go through a gap stile (*SP Path to Rampsholme Foot Bridge*). Continue across five fields passing to the front of Rampsholme Farm. Follow a clear path along the wall/fence to reach Rampsholme Bridge.
- 11 **GR: 911 986** Cross the bridge and turn right, follow the riverbank and pass through a gap stile. After about 10 yards (9m), go through a gap stile on the left (*SP Muker*). Continue on a clear track across seven meadows, where a gap stile leads onto a narrow lane.
- 12 **GR: 910 980** Follow the lane into the village. Bear left and continue along the lane passing the church and public hall, to reach the main road at Muker. Turn left and return to the car park.

COFFIN FOR SHORT TERM LET!

For many years the parishioners of Muker shared a reusable communal coffin. This was carried to the churchyard where the corpse was removed and placed in the grave. The coffin was then stored ready to be used again for the next funeral. This practice ceased in 1735, when the vicar decreed that all of his parishioners deserved the dignity of being buried in their own personal coffin.