



## Route Information

**Distance** 7.5 kilometres (4.7 miles)

**Ascent** 220 metres (720 feet)

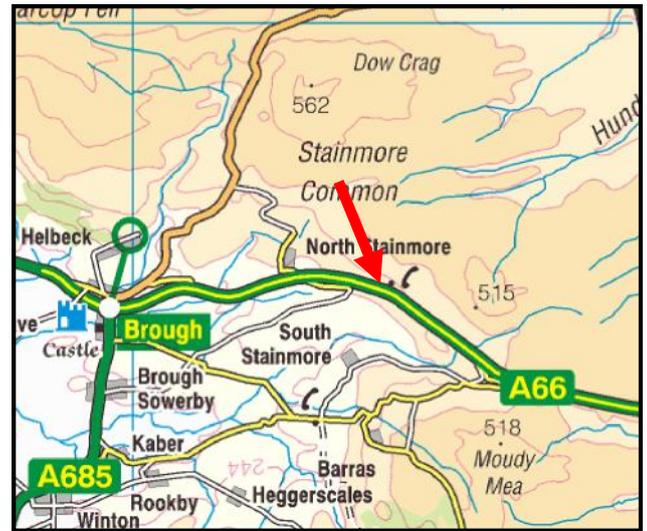
**Time needed** 2½ hours (approx)

### Start point

Off the A66, approx 3.5 miles to the east of Brough at NY 849 147. Roadside parking available on minor road just off the A66 east-bound carriageway, at Slapestone Bridge

### Public Transport

The start point is served by bus route 352 (limited service)



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*Waterfall in Smelldale Beck*

This is a thoroughly rewarding away-from-it-all moorland walk, made even more so by the rarity of use, you'll feel a pioneer! The route focuses upon an amphitheatre scarp culminating on the headland of Great Knipe with its commanding views over the Stainmore Pass and across the upper realms of the greater

Eden valley. Contained within a defined Ministry of Defence so-called 'dry range', used periodically for night-time exercises, for the lion-share of its life the land is a quiet sheep walk and the perfect place for a solitude-seeking stroll in semi-wild country.

From the start point ascend the metalled track, the tarmac ending at the top of the rise. The small cascades of Smelldale Gill to the left, hints to a former industrial past.

The walled lane leads on with a view right into an enclosure of limestone pavement. This area of clints and grikes lies within access land so you can visit this feature - use the gate to the right at the bottom of the hill and the formal hand-gate at the top of the bank with its ornamental limestone finials.

The lane crosses a cattle grid/gate whereupon find an Open Access notice-board, more precisely a MoD map defining their dry range estate and pin-pointing the location of a dozen or so waymark posts and the suggested circuit as described in this leaflet.

Follow the open track with young deciduous plantings fringing the beck. Naturally you'll

be drawn to the handsome waterfall spilling from a limestone shelf with a pillar in its midst and study, as you do, the contrasting geological bedding below.

The shelter-belt to the right shields a sturdy stone barn, lying within a parcel of non-access land, obliging you to appreciate its picturesque setting from the track (the ladder-stile is for military use).



*Field barn adjacent to Smeltmill Beck (no access)*

As the wall on the right swings right, bear left fording the gill above a small waterfall, and keep to a track advancing north-west which leads to a fence-gate and then a ladder-stile over the wall.

Traverse the tough moorland pasture in a north-westerly direction rising by a white-topped waymark post to follow the rush-lined outflow of Plucka Tarn. The rush-fringed tarn catches the sky's reflection and can be whipped with the wind to make an attractive subject for the camera.

From this large sheet of water maintain course to step over the downward broken wall and mount the slope aiming for the ladder-stile in the far northern corner of the enclosure.



*Looking along Long Band towards High Edge*

*This spot is known as High Edge and lives up to the name with a fine view along the line of a continuing wall NNW towards Mickle Fell. The fell-name meant 'the big hill' and at 788m/2585ft it is the highest point in County Durham. Prior to the county boundary changes of 1974, it was the highest ground in Yorkshire.*

However, you do NOT cross the ladder-stile. Instead, veer right and keep the ridge-top wall close left. You will pass further white-topped waymark posts en route.

*The wall is built from varying thicknesses of local stone, on occasion wafer thin. See the sheep-creep hole short of the first broken wall crossing and soon after evidence of wall-stone quarrying. Spot a stand-alone cairn over the wall some 150m to the north, an apparently curious location on Stainmore Common, but it's purpose like many another on these lonely Pennine moors, has nothing to do with the guidance of casual recreational visitors.*

A considerable wall is crossed by a shapely ladder-stile and in due course we encounter a sheepfold feature containing the remnants of a shepherd's cot or bothy.



*Shepherd's cot looking to Great Knipe*

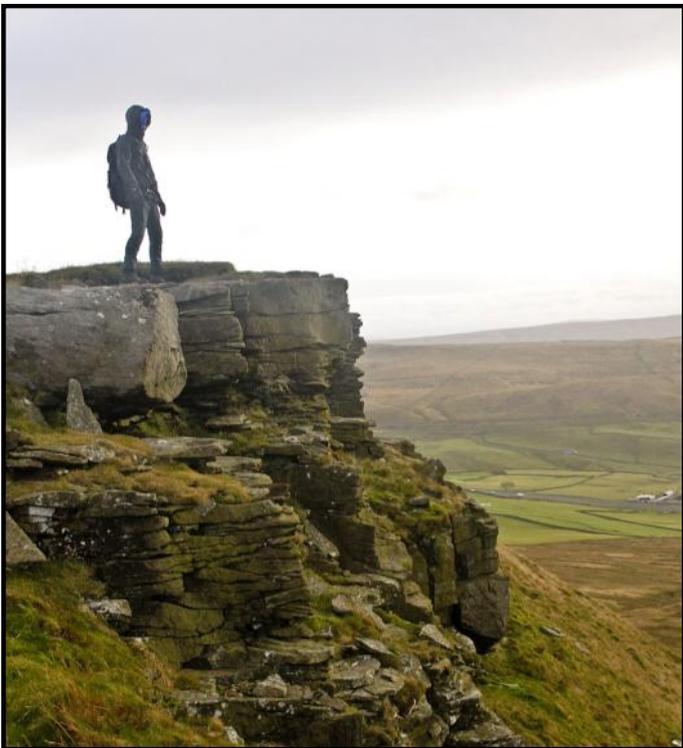
*A stoutly built single room dwelling with a peep-hole window. The walls remain to roof height, originally clad with heather divot thatching. There is a social history in that internal space, can one imagine the shepherd in occupancy preparing a basic oat meal and then settling down for the night on a fleece bed set on bracken?*

The principle scarp headland of Great Knipe holds a remote sense of distance even now, but is the focus of attention from the bothy's front door. Continue up beside the wall, skipping through a broken wall and coming by a hand-gate (ignore) from where a line of wooden pallet shooting butts can be seen

amid the adjacent heather moor. A few strides on and a fence replaces a collapsed section of wall with a brief new-build section just beyond.

But soon after, the wall is lost and a fence is our companion along the emergent edge. Though once through a particularly peaty headstream hollow the wall resumes climbing over Little Knipe to come along the edge by a small pool to the prominent outcrop.

*The craggy headland replicates a Dark Peak edge, exposed to the westerly breeze. Great Knipe is descriptive, and meant the 'big projecting rock', of exactly the same meaning as 'scout'. Back from the edge, corralled by the ridge wall lies a another peaty tarn. Hiding just beyond the corner of the stands a concrete OS column at 516m/1693ft.*



*Looking out from Great Knipe*

Leave the summit due south, follow on down the slope passing a waymark post. As the rushes of Slapstone Sike envelope, look for a large wooden tripod with red-painted top: this is one of several you will notice marking the limit of military exercises.

Trend right (NWN) contouring past another waymark post and over a gill with vermin trap set on a pole, to reach a large sheepfold with excavated surround and an odd corner passage. Maintain direction coming above a wall to pass another waymark post drawn into a tapering wall corner. Pass on through and come above a sheepfold.

Continue on a contouring line to pass through a broken wall and onto an area of fractured boulders on High Crag by a waymark post. From here there are fine views back towards Great Knipe.



*Looking back to Great Knipe from High Crag with the golden light of evening*

Still keeping the wall on your left, you will eventually arrive at a gate. Pass through the gate, and shortly afterwards, join the outward route. From here it is but a short walk back downhill to our start point.

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