



Location: Six miles south of Whitby (NZ 969 013)

Main period: Bronze Age

Access: The North York Moors are rich in prehistoric rock art and a particular concentration, with some 200 examples known to date, occurs at Fylingdales Moor, 6 miles south of Whitby. Although not all panels are still visible, the large open moorland forms part of a conservation area managed by the Hawk and Owl Trust, making it accessible to the public. Free car parking can be found opposite the Ravenscar Mast (NZ 96991 01230). The Stoupe Brow path, which leaves from the north-west corner of the car park, passes close by to several rock art panels and other prehistoric features. Useful maps for self-guided walks can be found free of charge on the Hawk and Owl Trust website. Brown and Chappell (2005) also provide detailed information on the location rock art panels, including Ordnance Survey grid references. Fylingdales is exposed and the ground rough, especially if hunting for rock art off the main paths, and sturdy footwear, suitable outdoor clothing and a map are essential.

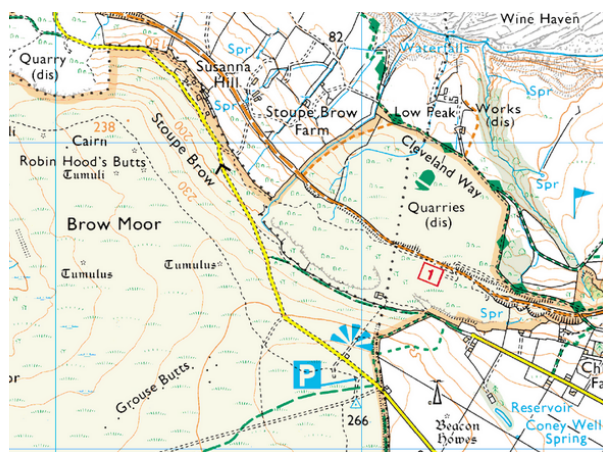


Fig. 1: Suggested car parking for visiting Fylingdales Moor.
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Fylingdales Moor refers collectively to Stoupe Brow Moor, Howdale Moor and Stony Marl Moor (Figs 1 & 3). The rock art panels are found nestled in amongst many other prehistoric features, including Early Bronze Age stone cairns which are still visible from the Stoupe Brow path. The rock art does not appear to be directly associated with the burial mounds, but is carved into outcrops of sandstone dotted across the area many of which are now hidden by undergrowth or have suffered heavy erosion.

The surviving carvings are mainly based on the 'cup-and-ring' combined motif (for examples see Fig. 2), which were 'pecked' into the rock surface with sharp tools. The 'cups' are round hollows, often 3–10 cm in diameter and 2–3 cm deep, while 'rings' are circular grooves. The two motifs occur both singly and together, occasionally forming complex and elaborate designs. A rarer set of geometric incised lines was more recently found on a solitary panel on the moor (it has been re-buried to prevent erosion), which echoed the lozenges, triangles and chevrons found on Passage tombs (chambered burial monuments) which were built in Scotland, Anglesey and Ireland in the Middle Neolithic. Dating the 'cup-and-ring' marks is made difficult by the rarity of stratigraphic evidence, but their occurrence on Neolithic and Early Bronze Age monuments (3900–1500 BC) allows the possibility that they were executed over a long period.

Why the rock art was carved is unknown. Various motivations have been suggested, including artistic expression, territorial or way markers, and even 'prehistoric graffiti'! (Parker Pearson 1993). During the Neolithic and Early Bronze Age, communities of the North York Moors probably led a seasonally mobile lifestyle, moving with their domestic animals or to collect raw materials for stone tools and other necessities. It has been suggested that people moving through the region, as part of the seasonal grazing cycle or for the purposes of trade and inter-regional communication may have carved the symbols to leave records of their journeys. The numerous burial mounds in this region suggest that the landscape may have also held special meanings for the prehistoric local communities, associated with their burial ceremonies and ancestors.

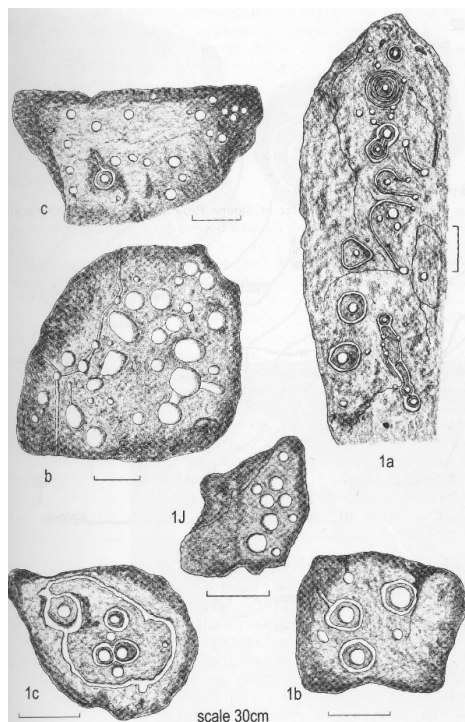


Fig. 2: Examples of cup-and-ring marks from Fylingdales Moor (© Brown & Chappell 2005, 37, fig. 18). These motifs are from areas A and B, shown in Fig. 3.

The history of detection and research of rock art at Fylingdales Moor has been published by Paul Brown and Graeme Chappell (2005). Examples were first discovered in the nineteenth century, when antiquarians hunting for prehistoric treasures noticed the distinctive cup-and-ring marks. Sporadic discoveries continued into the 1930s, but it was not until the 1960s that more systematic fieldwork was carried out by Stuart W. Feather. Feather, who worked for the Bradford Museum Services, is said to have camped overnight on the moors while searching for rock art. His dedication was rewarded as he was able to identify a further 30 panels, published in the *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal* for 1966. In September 2003, a fire swept across the moor, which although it did much damage to both the ecology and some of the stones, it also led to the discovery of 80 new rock art panels by Paul Brown and Graeme Chappell (Fig. 3). Copies of the rock art discovered in 2003 are on display at Whitby Museum.

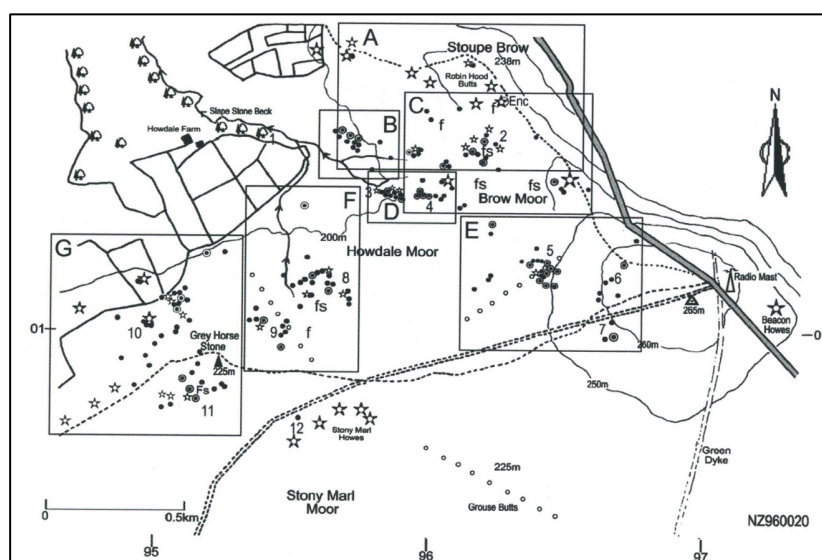


Fig. 3. The distribution of rock art at Fylingdales (© Brown & Chappell 2005, 26, fig. 12). Black dots are cup marks, circles are ring marks and stars are burial cairns. Cup-and-ring marks are indicated by black dots inside a circle.

References and further information:

- Brown, P. & Chappell, G. 2005. *Prehistoric Rock Art in the North York Moors*. Stroud: History Press
- Feather, S.W. 1966. Fylingdales. *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal* 41, 557
- Parker Pearson, M. 1993. *Bronze Age Britain*. London: Batesford/English Heritage
- Sharpe, K., Barnett, T. & Rushton, S. 2008. *The Prehistoric Rock Art of England: recording, managing and enjoying our carved heritage*. Braybridge: English Heritage/Northumberland County Council: http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/catalogue/era-836/dissemination/pdf/ERA_Brochure.pdf
- The Hawk and Owl Trust: www.hawkandowl.org/fylingdales/about-fylingdales/
- The Modern Antiquarian http://www.themodernantiquarian.com/site/3592/fylingdales_moor.html
- Whitby Museum <http://www.whitbymuseum.org.uk/index.htm>
- Yorkshire Rock Art <http://www.cupstones.f9.co.uk/>

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