
32 Echo Crag

Theme: Climate and landscape change

Location

Echo Crag is northwest of Byrness on the A68 road to Scotland. You can park at Byrness village [NT 742 044]. It is a rough 3 kilometre hike from there.

Description

On a remote hillside tucked away in the northwest of the county is a dramatic, weathered and worn sandstone escarpment with expansive views over north Northumberland's hills and valleys.

These rocks are part of the Fell Sandstone. They form crags and escarpments in a big arc around the Cheviot hills and across Northumberland. 335 million years ago, during early Carboniferous times, they were sand and pebbles in a meandering and braided river system flowing across a broad plain. The way the rocks look now, their shape and texture as pock-marked crags, is mostly the result of weathering during and after the last glaciation of northern Britain. As well as the natural rocks outcrops, with their characteristic holes and hollows, there is a small quarry where you can see sedimentary structures that show evidence of the fluvial origin of the sandstone.

The rock outcrops are notable for their rich upland lichen assemblage, including several species that are common in the Scottish highlands but very rarely found south of the border. The most important of these are *Alectoria sarmentosa*, also known from the Kielder Stone, and *Platismatia norvegica* at its only confirmed site in England. The *Alectoria* is one of the species that could be a relict of native pine forest, of which a fragment in neighbouring North Tynedale is a possible survival. The crags are set among bilberry and heather.

Photographs

(Photo 32-1) Weathered and worn sandstone at Echo Crag.

(Photo 32-2) Echo Crag looking north.



(Photo 32-1) Weathered and worn sandstone at Echo Crags.



(Photo 32-2) Echo Crags looking north.