
37 Shaftoe Crag

Theme: Climate and landscape change

Location

About 3 kilometres to the west of Bolam Lake Country Park [NZ 053 818], where you can park.

Description

In the middle of gentle, rolling Northumberland countryside, only 14 miles northwest of Newcastle are wild gritstone crags; a moorland oasis. The views from the crags are fantastic, with Simonside to the north, and Hadrian's Wall country to the south.

The gritstones of Shaftoe Crag are about 325 million years old and from the Carboniferous period. These and the crags to the north, near Rothley, are made of a coarse-grained, pebbly sandstone. They were once sand and pebbles carried in the channel of a large, fast-flowing river; over millions of years the sand and pebbles turned to rock. They are hard and so resist erosion and stand proud and high in the landscape. Some of the sandstone ridges are smoothed and orientated west-east, evidence of the scraping and streamlining by ice sheets.

Like many prominent rocky features, these crags have attracted the attention of humankind from Stone Age times and continue to do so. Look out for overhangs which may once have been rock shelters, the ancient Romano-British settlement at Salter's Nick and the drove road nearby. The Devil's Punch Bowl is a pothole on the crag top which folklore says was filled with wine to celebrate a Blakett wedding. Look for the Tailor and his Man, a huge split gritstone boulder at the base of the escarpment.

The rock faces are rich in ferns: all of brittle bladder-fern, maidenhair spleenwort, lady fern, male fern, black spleenwort, broad buckler-fern and common polypody can be found.

Photographs

(Photo 37-1) Gritstone Shaftoe Crag.

(Photo 37-2) The Devil's Punchbowl in the sandstone of Shaftoe Crag



(Photo 37-1) Gritstone Shaftoe Crags.



(Photo 37-2) The Devil's Punchbowl in the sandstone of Shaftoe Crags