

# PREHISTORIC ROCK ART, DOBB EDGE, BASLOW

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## THE CARVING

This good example of rock art was brought to this author's attention late in 2012. It lies at SK 26827157, on an earthfast gritstone slab a short distance from a drystone field wall on flat, boulder-strewn, land at the crest of Dobb Edge, set back a short distance from the scarp. This ground, at the top of the main Eastern Moors western shelf, is high above the northern end of Chatsworth Park and has been part of the Chatsworth Estate since the early 19th century, when land in Baslow was exchanged with the Duke of Rutland.

The motif still relatively clear, if somewhat worn (Plate 1), is pecked into the rock and comprises three carefully formed concentric rings around a small central dot, with a groove or gutter running from the centre to the outside (Fig. 1). The outer ring has an external diameter of 230-240mm. The whole is on the slightly raised crest of a small horizontal earthfast, with only part of the undulating face visible. This exact positioning suggests there were never further motifs on the rock. Until recent years the carving had probably long been buried, as is commonly the case in the Peak (Barnatt and Robinson 2003), and may well be why it survived through to today. This new discovery reinforces this point and reminds us there are presumably more examples that will sooner or later emerge from the tens of thousands of buried boulders in the region.

The Dobb Edge rock art lies on Open Access land at the edge of a concession path. When inspected in 2012 it was clear that people had been walking over it for some time, and it was presumably this footfall which had eroded away the turf cover. One member of the Chatsworth Estate team had been aware that the rock art existed for several years but had assumed that we also knew of its existence (David Spencer *pers. comm.*). From a conservation perspective the concern was that ongoing footfall would gradually erode the carving. The rock is earthfast so could not easily be moved and in any event this potential solution seemed inappropriate. Similarly, the path follows a straight field wall and diverting people would have been difficult. Thus, in order to protect the carving, Chatsworth Estate kindly agreed to import two small boulders, which have been placed to either side of the rock art slab to encourage people to walk around it rather than across it.

## ROCK ART IN THE PEAK DISTRICT

Known prehistoric rock art of the region has been reviewed previously (Barnatt and Reeder 1982; Barnatt and Frith 1983; Beckensall 1999; Barnatt and Robinson 2003). The Dobb Edge carving is the best local example found to date of a classic and particularly emblematic design motif, with only two others known locally that have concentric rings and gutter; at Calton Pasture (Barnatt and Reeder 1982, carving 8) and Ashover School (Barnatt and Robinson 2003, carving 40). Parallels for this design are known in all regions where 'cup and ring art' is common; as in the Ilkley Moor area, the North York Moors, the northern Yorkshire Dales and

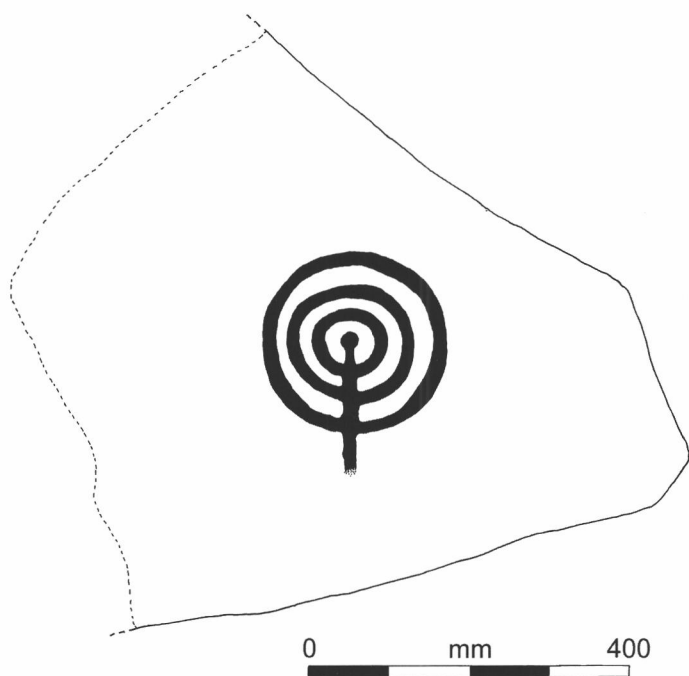


Fig. 1: The Dobb Edge rock art, with the extent of exposed rock as recorded in December 2012.

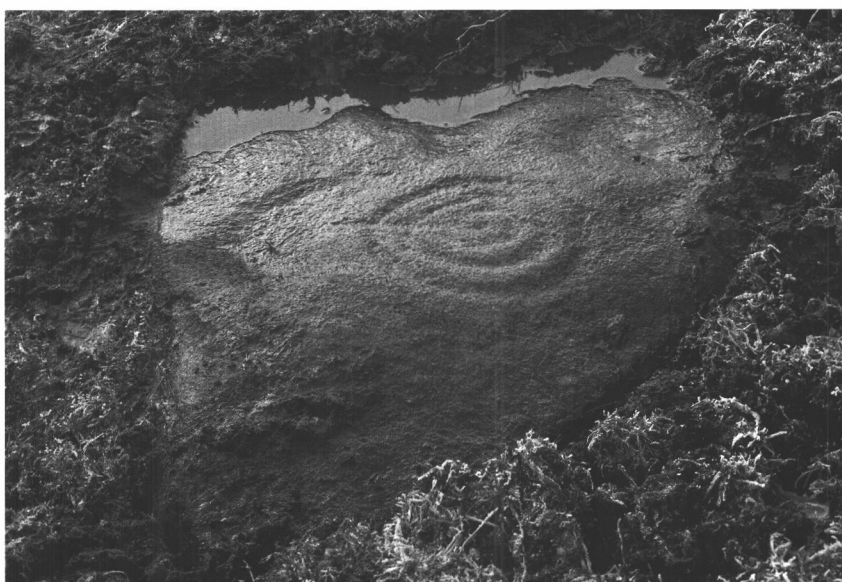


Plate 1: The Dobb Edge rock art, after being washed clean of soil for recording in December 2012.

through the Durham and Northumberland parts of the Northern Pennines, in Cumbria, South-west Scotland and Argyll (Beckensall and Laurie 1998; Beckensall 1999; 2000; 2001; Brown and Chappell 2005; Ilkley Archaeology Group 1986; Jones et al. 2011; Morris 1977; 1979).

Since 2003 few other potential examples of rock art in the Peak District have been brought to my attention. Those that have are either cups alone and thus of ambiguous interpretation, or better explained in other ways. In the 2003 corpus update, mention was made of an unpublished second carving in Ecclesall Wood in Sheffield (Barnatt and Robinson, carving 65). Photographs are now available on the Pecsætan website (<http://pecsaetan.weebly.com/ecclesall-woods-2.html>). This 'flat to the ground' slab has a design on its face that is similar in feel to the larger example in the wood (Barnatt and Frith 1893), comprising a series of sinuous lines in a twisting 'random' arrangement, and a small number of cups.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many thanks to Roger who let me know of the rock art, and is not fully named as he wanted to remain anonymous. Later, staff from Chatsworth Estate, in liaison with Sarah Whiteley of the National Park Authority, were extremely cooperative and carried out the conservation work on site. 'Span' (David Spencer) remembers seeing the art several years before. 'Juemai' (Jamie Stone) brought the website entry for the Ecclesall Wood carving to my attention.

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