
3. The Drake Stone

Theme: Ancient rivers, seas and life

Location

A one kilometre walk west of the village of Harbottle [NT 920 044].

Description

The Drake Stone is a very large and impressive block of sandstone resting on a craggy hillside. There are great views east and north over Harbottle and the Northumberland countryside.

The rock is Carboniferous and around 340 million years old. It is made of the same sandstone (the Fell Sandstone) that is the bedrock all around it and was probably detached from its original position by the action of ice. It isn't really a glacial erratic (a rock moved some distance from its bedrock by an ice sheet). As well as being huge the Stone shows the different layers and textures of the sandstone really well. It was once sand and pebbles carried down from the north by a very big river. The different layers and angles you can see in the sandstone show that this was a fast-flowing river with channels and underwater dunes.

There are many legends about the Drake Stone. People used to believe that if they touched it, it cured children of all illnesses and that if you spent the night beside it you would never leave.

Harbottle Moor, owned by Forestry England, is a nature reserve of Northumberland Wildlife Trust. On the way up to the Drake Stone you pass by drifts of bog myrtle. The shrub is aromatic, and was used to repel fleas and moths, gave a yellow dye, and flavoured beer. The Drake Stone is set in upland heather heath, with bilberry on the steepest slopes and peat bogs in the depressions.

Photographs

(Photo 03-1) The Drake Stone.

(Photo 03-2) Northern face of the Drake Stone.



(Photo 03-1) The Drake Stone.



(Photo 03-2) Northern face of the Drake Stone.