
8 Simonside

Theme: Ancient rivers, seas and life

Location

South of Rothbury. You can park at Lordenshaw [NZ 052 988] and take a look at the rock art there too.

Description

This bold sandstone escarpment is one of the iconic gems of the landscape of Northumberland. Its crags and towers gaze north over Coquetdale and towards the Cheviots.

335 million years ago these sandstones were sand and pebbles in an enormous river meandering across a broad flood plain from uplands in the distant north. If you can conjure up an image of the braided channels of the modern River Brahmaputra in Bangladesh you won't be far off. Erosion over millions of years, and especially during the last glaciation, has left this hard Fell Sandstone ridge standing loftily above the surrounding countryside.

Some believe Simonside to have been a sacred mountain to our ancestors, who built the cairns and tumuli and carved the rock art at nearby Lordenshaw. But regardless of whether Simonside was sacred, it's safe to say those early people understood the power and influence of these rocks on our material and spiritual lives more than most of us do today.

This mosaic of wet and dry moorland is now mainly covered in heather but there's bilberry and cross leaved heath too and in the bogs are hare's-tail cotton grass and the insect eating plant round-leaved sundew. Waders such as curlews and golden plover breed here, as do kestrels and ravens and the ubiquitous red grouse — this is a landscape managed for the purpose of grouse shooting.

Photographs

(Photo 08-1) Simonside escarpment.

(Photo 08-2) Looking north across the Simonside sandstone escarpment.



(Photo 08-1) Simonside escarpment.



(Photo 08-2) Looking north across the Simonside sandstone escarpment.