

Location: Stanton Moor is a small, almost detached, upland plateau on the SW edge of the eastern gritstone moors of the Derbyshire Peak District. It lies between Matlock and Bakewell near the villages of Birchover and Stanton-in-Peak.

Main period: Bronze Age, amidst evidence of medieval–19th century activity

Access & ownership: Stanton Moor is a designated Scheduled Ancient Monument. The stone circle is a 10-minute walk from the road.



Fig. 1. Nine Ladies stone circle. Wikimedia Commons

The moor has two Bronze Age stone circles – Nine Ladies (Fig. 1) and Doll Tor (Fig. 3) – and three embanked stone circles or ring cairns – Stanton Moor I ('North Circle'), Stanton Moor III ('Central Circle'), and Stanton Moor IV ('South Circle'). There are also around 120 other cairns and a number of natural standing stones and rock outcrops. Most of the monuments lie on the E and S slopes of the moor where there are extensive views over the River Derwent. This may, however, result from destructive stone quarrying in the central area. Early antiquarian investigations, were destructive by modern standards but as with similar work around Stonehenge, have left us with a remarkably complete burial record. All were cremations, often placed within collared urns that can be broadly dated to 1900–1700 BC. The few, rather poor, additional grave goods recovered (a bronze knife, a bronze awl, a bone dagger-pommel, a bone bead, a clay stud, a stone battle axe and some pygmy cups) support the picture of a short-lived early Bronze Age cemetery, as do some faience (blue glass) beads from the ring cairns.

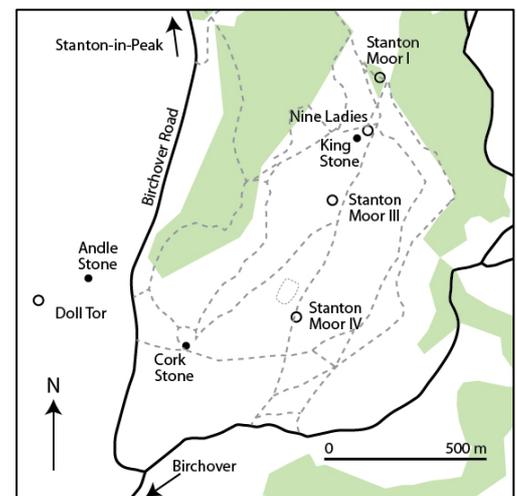


Fig. 2. Map of Stanton Moor showing main prehistoric monuments

Nine Ladies (SK 249 635) comprises nine millstone grit stones, none more than a metre tall, forming a rough circle (Fig. 1) about 10 m across, with a gap at the S side. No stone-hole has been found suggesting the gap was intended. However a tenth stone was discovered in the dry summer of 1976; it lies flat, a little to the E. The circle is built on an embankment which levelled the local terrain; there is a faint trace of the outer bank and what may have been a small cairn or earth mound near the centre. The site may once have had good views to the N (Wye valley) and the E (Derwent valley), but these are now obscured by trees. The small **King Stone** lies 40 m SW of the Nine Ladies and is clearly visible from the circle. This graffiti-covered stone formed part of a now destroyed ring cairn. It was once somewhat taller but was damaged after being hit by a vehicle. The Nine Ladies circle was among the 28 monuments in England and Wales included in General Pitt-Rivers' Schedule to the first Ancient Monuments Protection Act, which became law in 1882. It was taken into state care the following year.



Fig. 3. Doll Tor By Elfmeterschiessen [CC BY-SA 3.0]

Finds from excavations by the Heathcotes in the 1930s can now be seen at the Weston Park Museum, Sheffield, including a fine barbed and tanged flint arrowhead (Fig. 5a), 3.7 cm in length, found just outside the stone circle, close to one of the stones. At the base of the stone, inside the circle, was a cremation deposit.

In 1994, after serious damage caused by unauthorised 'restoration', English Heritage and the Peak District National Park Authority undertook new excavations and restored Doll Tor to its original Bronze Age condition. The following year a large part of Stanton Moor was designated a Scheduled Monument.

The small circle of **Doll Tor** (SK 2382 6286) lies to the west of the Birchover Road, near to the impressive natural rock outcrop known as the Andle Stone. Six stones linked by low drystone walling form a ring 6 m diameter. Several urn cremations and pygmy cups were buried in the interior which was then covered by rubble to form a levelled platform. A ring-cairn was added on the E side of the circle incorporating one of its stones (Figs 3 & 4). Under a large flat slab in the centre of this cairn was a female cremation with a segmented bead of faience (a glass coloured turquoise with copper). Other cremations, three with collared urns and one with a star shaped faience bead (Fig. 5), were placed around the inner edge of the stone bank (the irregular circle of stones in red in Fig. 4). This was later filled in to make a flat-topped platform cairn.

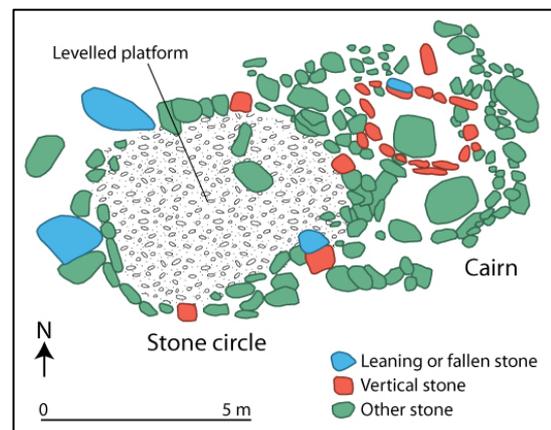


Fig. 4. Plan of the site from the 1930s excavation. After Heathcote 1939b



Fig. 5-7. Finds from Doll Tor held at Weston Park Museum. Fig 5 (left): arrowhead; Fig 6 (centre): faience bead; Fig 7 (right): urn. Images by permission of Museums Sheffield. Copyright reserved

References and further information

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Stanton Moor on Stone-Circles.org.uk: <http://www.stone-circles.org.uk/stone/stantonmoor.htm>

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