

## **Stanton Moor – Nine Ladies Circular Audio Trail Transcript**

Stanton Moor, a hugely contested landscape, has been used in many different ways for thousands of years. Offering spectacular views of the surrounding landscape Stanton Moor is home to over seventy ancient monuments and was recognised as a very sacred and special place, an understanding that continues into the present time. Others have been attracted here too leaving permanent reminders of their presence. In particular, quarry manufacturers have recognised the particularly high quality of the gritstone locally and have carved spaces which can now be searched for meaning. Following the footsteps of our ancestors this short, 2 mile walk explores these diverse ways in which the stone beneath us, has and continues to shape the diverse landscapes on Stanton Moor.

### **Audio Stop 1: (Start)**

Welcome to the Stanton Moor guided tour. My name is Aimee Blease Bourne and I am going to be leading this walk with you today. I am currently working for Moors For the Future as the Moor Care Assistant and have recently completed my MA at Staffordshire University, where I undertook a year long research project on Stanton Moor. If I could just take this moment to remind you to always be prepared when going on such walks, please bring with you all the usual navigational equipment, an OS map, GPS, a compass and the illustrative map that compliments this walk. Also don't forget something to drink, water proof clothing, a good pair of walking boots and a sun cream if we are having particularly hot weather.

About a square mile in area, Stanton Moor is a very rich, very interesting landscape. Geographically it lies mid-way between Bakewell to the North West and Matlock to the South East in Derbyshire. Strangely, the moor is situated on an isolated gritstone plateau, in the heart of limestone country and was formed over 300 million years ago. The area is full of natural beauty and supports a wealth of wildlife habitats such as badgers, bats, deer and rare plants such as heath cud weed. Although the moors are often perceived as wilderness and natural places, they have been shaped over thousands of years by the people who have lived, worked and visited the area. Over 70 ancient monuments including 5 known stone circles have been discovered on Stanton Moor dating back to over 4000 years old. Urns, beads, arrow heads and tools have all been excavated from the moor.

Other sites of interest include 19<sup>th</sup> century remembrance towers, natural rock formations and old quarry ruins.

This guide will take you around the edge of the moor, beginning at the south west entrance. You will be treading the footsteps of our ancestors, visiting special places that have drawn humankind for thousands and thousands of years.

Following the public footpath, cross over a stile and after approximately 100 metres you will reach the cork stone - standing approximately 15 feet high.

### **Audio Stop 2: Cork Stone**

This is the first natural rocky outcrop that you will visit today on Stanton Moor. Although this rock called the Cork Stone seems as though it has been sculpted by humans due to its familiar form, it has actually been shaped naturally by the weathering of the softer parts of the gritstone and is a relic left over from the ice age.

One of the earliest records of this stone is written by Rooke in 1789 and he describes it as being surrounded by four standing stones. There is no sign of this today; however the close proximity of the quarries to the stone may suggest that the quarry men removed them.

Rock idols such as the Cork stone together with other natural rocky outcrops that can be seen on the moor and through-out the Peak District, have been worshiped for thousands of years by human kind. Before henge's, stone circles or any other type of monument was erected, such natural places of wonder also including water falls, sacred trees and rivers inspired us. It was a time when human kind didn't differentiate themselves from nature, the earth was our home we were as one. But the coming of agriculture meant that increasingly people began to exert control and independence over the land and as a direct reaction to this people began to create stone monuments.

Taking the right hand fork, continue along the footpath for approximately 4 minutes until you reach a distinct crossroads. Turn left and you will see a semi-circular feature to the right of the path – this is T2.

### **Audio Stop 3: T2**

A slight de-tour from the main route of this walk we come across a very important burial mound. If you look closely deep within the heather you'll notice that the main cist in the centre of the monument is surrounded by a rubble curb, forming an outer circle. This site was one of the earliest monuments to be excavated on the moor probably due to its large size and its position and has been called T2 by Heathcote, the local archaeologist.

1000 feet above sea level, this ancient monument, is strategically and aesthetically placed within the landscape giving us excellent views along this stretch of the Derwent valley.

This monument has suffered from centuries of excavations, however little was actually recorded about it prior to Heathcotes detailed excavations in the 1920's. These in depth records can be accessed from the Moors for the Future website. For thousands of years, the Peak District has attracted settlers its rich soils and fresh water supply has provided an ideal location. All the earliest and largest monuments within the park are located on the limestone plateau of the white peak, for example the henge Arbor Low. Such Neolithic monuments are very large in size and differ from the later monuments that can be seen on Stanton moor and along the lower slopes of the gritstone uplands of the Peak District National Park. This site was created around 4000 years ago, in a prehistoric era that has been labelled the bronze-age, due to the emergence of bronze smelting and working skills.

This era lies between the Neolithic and the Iron Age and like all labels should be treated as a *rough guide only*. At this time research suggests that small agricultural communities of family groups began to find permanent settlement on the limestone plateau and on the lower slopes of the fertile gritstone.

It is here that we find the majority of monuments have been constructed. But unlike the limestone plateau where intense farming has led to the destruction of many sites, these upland areas remained largely untouched.

Through-out this period, as the population was increasing, monuments tended to diminish in size. So the largest cairns of the moor appear to be the oldest and often contain a central cist for the primary internment. This is the case for this monument and

is seen as one of the oldest monuments. Subsequent internments have then been buried around the edges. The primary burial from this site was that of a young man and he was buried in a tomb formed by slabs of stone. In the tomb there were also pieces of bronze and fragments of pottery. 11 other internments were also discovered at this site, together with cinery urns which held the ashes and burnt bones, flint tools, knives, pigmy vessels, arrow heads and an ornamental vessel which at the time that it was recovered, received much attention in the world of archaeology, due to its rare and remarkable decoration, which was finer than usually found in the bronze age and also it resembled Scottish pottery.

When attempting to place the burials of this monument in chronological order, local archaeologist Heathcote considered the distance from the central cist where the primary internment was found and the depth at which they were buried. Today radiocarbon dating helps us to discover the age of things. Evidence is not conclusive, however research suggests that the earliest fragments of pottery found within this monument dates from around 2000BC, with evolving examples of designs from many different times up to around 650BC. This means that this monument was used as a burial site for over 1000 years and holds great significance towards our understanding of the moor and its historical perspective.

Looking beyond T2 you should see your next stop, the Gorse Stone about 400 metres in the east. Return to, and continue along the path we turned off to visit T2 and follow this path for approximately 50 metres. Here, take the right hand fork down to the fenceline where you will need to cross over the stile to Gorse Stone situated on National Trust land.

#### **Audio Stop 4: Gorse Stone**

As we walk across the eastern edge of the moor we come across a number of rock outcrops all made from gritstone.

Firstly, we come across the Gorse Stone and there have been attempts at re-shaping this stone as can be seen on close inspection. Legend supposes that druids used this elevated place as a type of alter to address the local people and this myth can be understood upon standing on the edge of the rock looking out back towards T2, to the west. South of this stone can be found a platform or edge that has socket holes carved into it. These are particularly intriguing regarding their function.

Taking a slight de-tour, head down the path, with the fence on your right, for about 200 metres and follow it round to the left until you see an Oak tree growing out of the rocks, here, hidden amongst the trees is Heart Stone. Upon close inspection you will see that this is one of the largest rocky outcrops on the moor and differs from those you will come across today. Surprisingly, for a site of such magnificence, little has been recorded about the space, but is definitely worth exploring!

When you are ready, return back up past gorse stone, with the fence now on you left hand side. Audio stop number 5 can be listened to at any point along this path, and you may want to walk while you listen. If so, follow the path as it first snakes left then right and after approximately 10 minutes (depending on your pace and whether you've stopped to take in the view) you will notice the fenceline takes a sharp left hand turn. It is here that if you look to your right you will see Cat Stone, Audio stop 6, nestled behind an oak tree.

## **Audio Stop 5: The nature of the moor**

This moor is dominated by tough dwarf shrubs such as heather and bilberry. Britain and Ireland supports a substantial proportion of the world's heather moorland and therefore these moors have global ecological and conservation importance. Moors are also important habitats for breeding birds such as Merlin, golden plover, the short eared owl and grouse, the latter being particularly important economically, providing financial incentive for much moorland management. While these species are not found here, you may catch sight of, or hear the occasional curlew visitor. In addition, the Peak District moors are also home to the only English population of mountain hares.

About 5000 years ago when the climate was warmer than today, humans first began to clear the moorland of their forests in order to settle and farm. By the Roman times the climate had become much cooler and people moved to live in the less exposed valleys. Today, you may see sheep grazing over the moor and you may spot places with burnt heather- this is principally done to act as fire breaks, which explains the zig-zag fashion across the moor from west to east, but it does encourage varied aged heather growth for the benefit of wildlife.

The surrounding cities of the Peak District, such as Sheffield and Manchester have had a disastrous effect on plant diversity on the moors, in particular the legacy of air pollution had prevented sphagnum moss growth. However, in recent years the species has recovered to once again grow here. This has led to implications for peat formation, which is mainly made up of these mosses.

Also, over-grazing and the trampling of large numbers of visitors to this site has led to erosion problems, particularly around Nine Ladies Stone circle, as we shall soon see. Fires are also a major cause of erosion and habitat loss on the moorland. Disregarded cigarette ends, and dropping litter such as glass and foil poses a serious threat to this landscape particularly as these moorlands become very dry in the summer months and fires can very quickly spiral out of control.

As the climate is also changing predictions forecast warmer, wetter winters and hotter, drier summers. This could also result in increased peat erosion and more accidental fires.

The Peak District moors are the most visited moorlands in the world and the Moors for the Future Partnership, through a program of new initiatives aims to restore and conserve moorland sites damaged by access and recreation and to enhance the experience of the moorland for locals and visitors, encouraging greater care to be taken of this unique landscape.

## **Audio Stop 6: The Cat Stone and the Tower**

The next rocky outcrop on this path is called the Cat Stone, overlooking Stanton Lees. In the summer months this can be difficult to find because of the leaves and ferns. The name suggests that once a battle was fought here. On the rock there is a deeply cut inscription EIN 1831 however there is nothing recorded about the reasons or date of the graffiti. Continuing following the path you were on and within 3 minutes you will stumble across a 30ft high gritstone tower made in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to commemorate the Reform Bill and used to bear the inscription 'Earl Gray 1832'. At the top of the hill to the back of the tower (Westside) there is a stile, climb over and take the right hand path. This will take you straight to the Nine Ladies Stone Circle.

## **Audio Stop 7: The Nine Ladies and the Fiddler**

Derbyshire stone circles, in comparison to other circles of England and Scotland are characteristically small in both height and diameter. There are a number of varieties that can be found on Stanton moor, for example, some have a ring of upright stones set into a bank such as here The Nine Ladies, while others have a bank but no standing stones. These are referred to as ring cairns.

Such places were made as some kind of focal point, a special and sacred space that symbolises life on earth as forever transforming, rhythmically and constantly between birth and death. The actual purpose however is only a guess and archaeology can never reveal to us the secrets that are held within. Still, people attempt to fix their meaning and some theories have suggested that stone circles are connected with astronomy, as many monuments in the British Isles show some kind of alignment with the stars. They have also been seen as sacred centres similar to today's church, whereby rituals associated with fertility, birth, death and the seasons were performed.

This stone circle called the nine ladies would be described as an embanked stone circle in archaeology, as once the stones would have sat on a rubble bank and there would have been a cairn in its centre. Erosion and disruption caused by early excavations and visitors to the site has caused this to decrease in size. A staggering 5 inches of soil had been eroded from some parts of this monument in just 12 years. Reconstruction work has since taken place, using the results of an English Heritage survey in the late 1980's to restore the last known detailed levels.

Many writers have suggested that the spaces between the upright stones may have once been filled with smaller stones, like a modern day wall. Subsequent farmers or landowners may have removed these for his fences and may have not bothered with the larger stones. There also may have been 11 stones once if they had been evenly spread out. Approximately 40metres to the southwest of the circle is a single standing stone known as the fiddler or the Kings Stone. This stone has suffered graffiti, as with many other sacred stones on this moor and it was mentioned in Charles Dickens' Pickwick Papers, criticising antiquarianism. This stone was broken in the 90's when a van reversed into the back of it. The Peak District National Park Authority arranged for a local stone mason to repair it and they fitted stainless steel rods into it and has re-set it in the hope of preventing water damage.

Local legend suggests that the circle was formed when 9 witches were turned to stone when dancing to the music of the fiddle one Sunday evening. Standing close to the circle is a young oak tree. It is said that anyone wanting a wish to come true should tie some natural material to the branches of this tree and make the wish three times. If you decide to do this, then please offer only natural materials such as grass. In the past people have tied bracelets, beads, ribbons, tin foil, coloured string, candles and even old socks to the branches or tied natural materials with non-natural bindings such as elastic bands, ribbon or cord. This creates a regular litter problem which results in precious staff time being taken up removing these items. If you're offering is not WHOLLY natural, your wish will not come true. Thank you and good luck!

In 1882 the monument was taken into the care of the state and soon afterwards both the Nine Ladies and the Fiddler stone were surrounded by a wall. However and thankfully, the enclosure was seen as detrimental to the setting of the monument and so it was removed in the 1980's.

This stone circle attracts thousands of people each year and is very special to many people. Their power continues into today's society. Please do not damage the stones in anyway; this includes leaning on them, lighting fires in or near the stones, placing candles on the stones or dropping litter. Please respect this special place.

### **Audio Stop 8: The Quarries**

The north and west parts of this moor are predominately covered by Silver Birch trees. There are also some Larch trees, oaks, rowan, beeches and sweet chestnut trees here and there. These wooded areas are strategically placed and cover the landscapes that have been quarried for mineral and stone. These spaces expose to us the layer of the earth that we are so familiar with seeing on the upland of this moor, gritstone

More than 300 million years ago, Derbyshire formed part of the huge mouth of a river that was flowing down from the highlands of Scotland. Over the years, sediments of mud, coarse sand, pebbles and gravels were deposited in successive layers under the water on top of the limestone. They rose as sandbanks which eventually became solidified and compressed to create this gritstone. So because gritstone is strong, it tends to form the highest ground in the Peak District. Also because it has variable layers, it forms cliffs and edges where erosion of the weaker layers tends to undermine the stronger materials above. As a result, the overhang breaks off and we get the edges we can see today.

Gritstone outcrops in a horseshoe shape around the Peak District and its sharp edges can be seen around Curber and Calver in the East, Edale in the North and the Roaches and Ramshaw rocks in the west.

Gritstone appears in many forms. In much of these old quarries on the moor you are able to see the effects of the layering that create natural lines of weakness within the rock.

On areas where there is little sign of these layers it has been suggested that one great flood may have dumped the whole layer on the floor in one episode. So, each unit or layer we see is said to have been laid down in one episode, this could be a flood or the tide, geologists are unsure.

Locally this rock is known as Millstone grit because millstones used for grinding grain were made from it. Today the symbol of the peak district national park is a millstone- this is actually a stone circle!

Stanton Moor hosts one of the largest dimensional stone quarries in the British Isles. This high quality gritstone that has been extracted for centuries from this moor is a very popular building stone and is used predominately today in housing. Quarrying for stone and minerals has a long history in the Peak District and on Stanton Moor and many of the quarries and mines were operating before the area became a national park. In fact the national park boundary was drawn so that it excluded many limestone quarries in the Buxton area. The policies on mineral extraction are decided by the planning authority for the park in liaison with other local and national government organisations that have the responsibility for matters such as noise nuisance, water and dust pollution and safety. In recent years there has been much contestation over further proposed quarrying on this moor. The place has received much media attention due to the presence of protesters on the north east edge of the moor, who are fighting to preserve and maintain this landscape against future quarry works.

Follow the path through the Birch trees and within 10 minutes you will come across the open moorland. Continuing down the path you will see a gate on the right hand side. Turn left so the gate is behind you and climb a small hill. Upon reaching the top you should be able to see the starting point of the journey, The Cork Stone. After walking around the quarry back to the Cork Stone, travel westwards, keeping the Cork Stone to your right and this will take you back to the start.

Thank you for listening to my representation of Stanton Moor. There are many questions we could still ask about this special place. Maybe before you leave you could think about what this place means to you and where you actually into it. What bits of the walk would you share with your friends and family upon arriving home? What could you give back as a sign of appreciation and respect? Think about your favourite spot on the moor. Hold that image in your head, almost like a photograph, using your imagination you will be able to re-visit this place that you find so special where ever you go.