

EXTRACT FROM ENGLISH HERITAGE'S RECORD OF SCHEDULED MONUMENTS

MONUMENT: Embanked small stone circle at Harker Mires on Harkerside Moor

PARISH: GRINTON

DISTRICT: RICHMONDSHIRE

COUNTY: NORTH YORKSHIRE

NATIONAL MONUMENT NO: 24539

NATIONAL GRID REFERENCE(S): SE03529761

DESCRIPTION OF THE MONUMENT

The monument is situated in thick heather on a north facing slope above the lower reaches of Swaledale on Harkerside Moor. It includes a substantial stone bank up to 3m wide, the inner face of which is marked by seven upright stones 0.3m-0.6m high. A single entrance is located on the east side. The monument has a diameter of 20m.

ASSESSMENT OF IMPORTANCE

Stone circles are prehistoric monuments comprising one or more circles of upright or recumbent stones. The circle of stones may be surrounded by earthwork features such as enclosing banks and ditches. Single upright stones may be found within the circle or outside it and avenues of stones radiating out from the circle occur at some sites. Burial cairns may also be found close to and on occasion within the circle. Stone circles are found throughout England although they are concentrated in western areas, with particular clusters in upland areas such as Bodmin and Dartmoor in the south-west and the Lake District and the rest of Cumbria in the north-west. This distribution may be more a reflection of present survival rather than an original pattern. Where excavated they have been found to date from the Late Neolithic to the Middle Bronze Age (c.2400-1000 BC). It is clear that they were carefully designed and laid out, frequently exhibiting very regularly spaced stones, the heights of which also appear to have been of some importance. We do not fully understand the uses for which these monuments were originally constructed but it is clear that they had considerable ritual importance for the societies that used them. In many instances excavation has indicated that they provided a focus for burials and the rituals that accompanied interment of the dead. Some circles appear to have had a calendrical function, helping mark the passage of time and seasons, this being indicated by the careful alignment of stones to mark important solar or lunar events such as sunrise or sunset at midsummer or midwinter. At other sites the spacing of individual circles throughout the landscape has led to a suggestion that each one provided some form of tribal gathering point for a specific social group. A small stone circle comprises a regular or irregular ring of between 7 and 16 stones with a diameter of between 4 and 20 metres. They are widespread throughout England although clusters are found on Dartmoor, the North Yorkshire Moors, in the Peak District and in the uplands of Cumbria and Northumberland. Of the 250 or so stone circles identified in England, over 100 are examples of small stone

circles. As a rare monument type which provides an important insight into prehistoric ritual activity, all surviving examples are worthy of preservation.

Embanked stone circles are a type of small stone circle in which the ring of upright stones is immediately surrounded by an earthen bank. The stones may appear to revet the bank. Identified examples are clustered in the Peak District, with a small number found in Wales, Northern England and Scotland. This is an undisturbed and therefore well preserved example of this monument type.

MONUMENT INCLUDED IN THE SCHEDULE ON 30th June 1995