

# Castlerigg

*Neolithic / Bronze Age Stone Circle*

East of Keswick, Cumbria [OS Map Ref NY292236](#)



[360 Degree Panorama](#)



*View of the circle looking towards the west - Summer 1994*

Thought to be one of the oldest [stone circles](#) in Britain and dating from either the late [Neolithic](#) or early [Bronze Age](#), Castlerigg or 'The Carles' stands on a plateau of land within a natural amphitheatre formed by hills including Skiddaw, Blencathra, Clough Head, High Seat, and the Derwent Fells - possibly one of the finest settings of any British circle. It is a oval shaped ring of 38 large stones (the tallest are around 3 metres high), with the north-south axis measures 32 metres across and the shorter east-west axis being 29 metres with faint traces of a bank to the north. Also to the north there are two large stones that mark the entrance which leads to a rectangular cove of 10 stones which measures around 7.5 metres by 3.5 metres and is offset from the centre but meets the eastern edge of the circle. Excavations of this strange structure in the late 19th century found only charcoal remains. The circle also contains 2 almost flattened [barrows](#) to the northeast and northwest but the only recorded material finds from the circle itself consist of a couple of large stone axe heads - possible evidence that the circle formed a link in the Cumbrian axe trade. Castlerigg also has an [outlier](#), a stone that stands next to a stile through a wall to the southwest of the circle.

In recent years several pieces of rock art have come to light at Castlerigg - there is a faint clockwise spiral on one of the stones that face into the cove but due to being badly eroded it is only possible to see it under favourable light conditions\*. A few other stones are decorated, one has a [cup](#) and partial ring, another has a chevron and another has either a chevron or crosshatch pattern.

Because of it's position in the heart of the Lake District, right on the edge of Keswick, the circle attracts many visitors whatever the weather or season, much like the [Merry Maidens](#) in Cornwall. Despite this it remains a truly magical place that draws one back time after time.

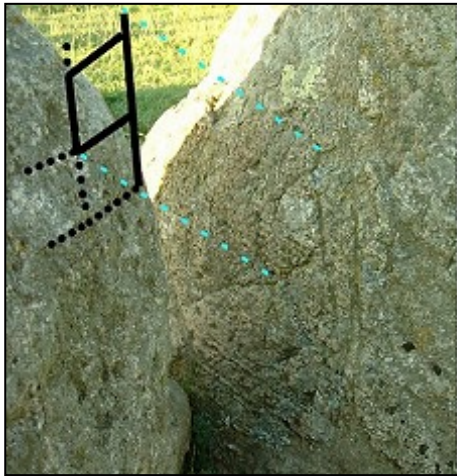
\*Update: In 2006 after much invesatigation is was concluded that no spiral carving exists on this stone!



*View to the east. On the left is the distant hill of Great Mell Fell while Clough Head is centre-right (2002)*



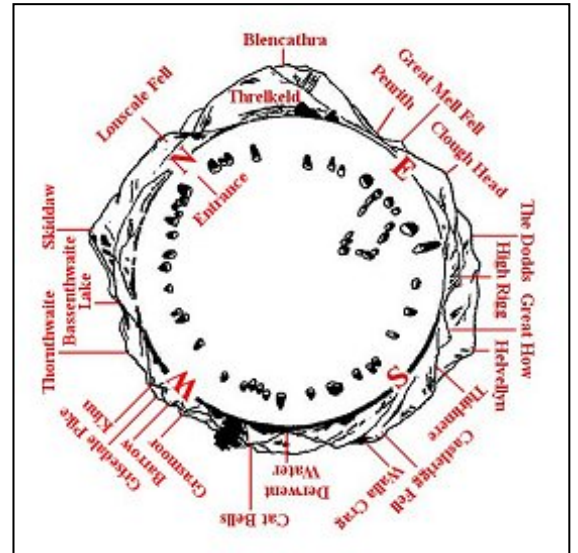
Left - View of the entrance stones looking towards the north. Right - Outlier towards the southwest.



Detail of the carvings on some of the stones.



Sunset at the circle - 1994



Plan of the hills around the site