

Stan BECKENSALL, Hexham/Northumberland

## RECENT DISCOVERIES OF PREHISTORIC ROCK-CARVINGS IN NORTH-UMBERLAND.

In this article I wish to keep the text to a minimum, as the illustrations are of greater importance.

Over the past seven years so much has been discovered (by a farmer, shepherd, forestry worker, college lecturer, schoolmaster, student, a lady out for a walk), that it emphasises what a great contribution the amateur can make to archaeology. Most of the discoveries are on near-horizontal outcrop rocks. The smaller, “portable” rocks either come from burial mounds or may be the remains of destroyed mounds. All the carvings are on sandstone. One set is in a definite “round barrow” context, and another associated with an enlarged Food Vessel.

### *Technique of Carving*

Some examples show clearly how the carvings were made. A pick of some sort was used, initially to rough out a design. Sometimes the design was not completed, and this may account for many faint figures on rocks that have been exposed to erosion.

The depth of picking varies, and there is evidence that a “heavy” design was imposed upon a more tentative one. It is impossible to assume any definite time lapse between the two.

### *Designs*

There can be a variety of designs in a small area, and those illustrated here have added considerably to the variations on themes that incorporate cups, ducts and grooves. We have rectangles, ovals, double rings, multiple concentric circles, cup clusters, a countersunk cup, radiates, “Keyhole” patterns and others. The rock strike and slope, its texture, are used to produce designs that, although sharing many common elements, manage to remain individual.

### *Context*

Each new site is listed below, and notes are added so that the reader can understand the context of the site.

#### *FOWBERRY MOOR EXCAVATION: (NU 019278)*

Over 20 metres of outcrop rock covered with carvings, with the remains of a round barrow containing 23 separate carvings, but no evidence of a burial. A single flint flake under the periphery stones of the barrow. The site, excavated by the author, lies in an area that has a very high concentration of carvings. There are also burial mounds.

#### *FOWBERRY MOOR ENCLOSURE: (NU 027263)*

In the same area, this horizontal outcrop rock has been scratched by the plough. Many of the figures are as fresh as the day they were carved.

*AMERSIDE LAW MOOR: (NU 075267, 076271, 081271)*

On high moorland in a cairnfield. Near-horizontal outcrop rock. The burial mounds have not been investigated in modern times.

*SCRAINWOOD, ALNHAM: (NU 998098)*

On a recently cleared hill, near burial mounds. Great heaps of stone cleared from the field and dumped in a disused quarry included one with a carving, so they might represent destroyed barrows.

*ALWINTON: (APPROX. NU 070940)*

Three carved rocks resulting from field clearance. The first found in this area.

*ROTHLEY CRAGS: (NZ 033934)*

A large flat-topped isolated rock with cups and single grooves. No others known in this area.

*HEPBURN MOOR: (APPROX. NU 250080)*

A triangular stone found beside recently excavated burial mounds.

Mr. F. Berthele, B.E.M., has done extensive field work in this area, which has produced not only a first-class collection of flint implements from Mesolithic times onwards, but ornaments such as beads, bracelets and parts of shale vessels. There are many burial mounds, but few rock carvings in the area.

*OAKWOOD STONE, HEXAM: (NY 943654)*

A fine stone, isolated on a ridge. Other small cleared stones suggest a destroyed burial mound. If so, this could have been a cist cover.

*ELLINGHAM: (APROX. NU 165260)*

Two stones found on edges of fields. Good agricultural land extensively worked. Flint implements. There may have been burial mounds.

*YETLINGTON LANE, WHITTINGHAM:*

A single stone on the edge of a field.

*CORBY CRAGS ROCK SHELTER: (NU 128096)*

Excavated by the author.

Carving on top of the rock shelter, on the floor of which was a cremation burial in an enlarged food vessel.

*KNITSLEY, COUNTY DURHAM:*

The first to be found in this county. It came from a dry stone wall. There have been burial mounds in the area.



Fig. 1: *Fowberry Moor*. The remains of a round barrow rest on a natural outcrop of sandstone that is covered with carvings.



Fig. 2: *Fowberry Moor*. Cups with concentric circles. Ducts. The pick marks are clearly visible. (Scale: inches)

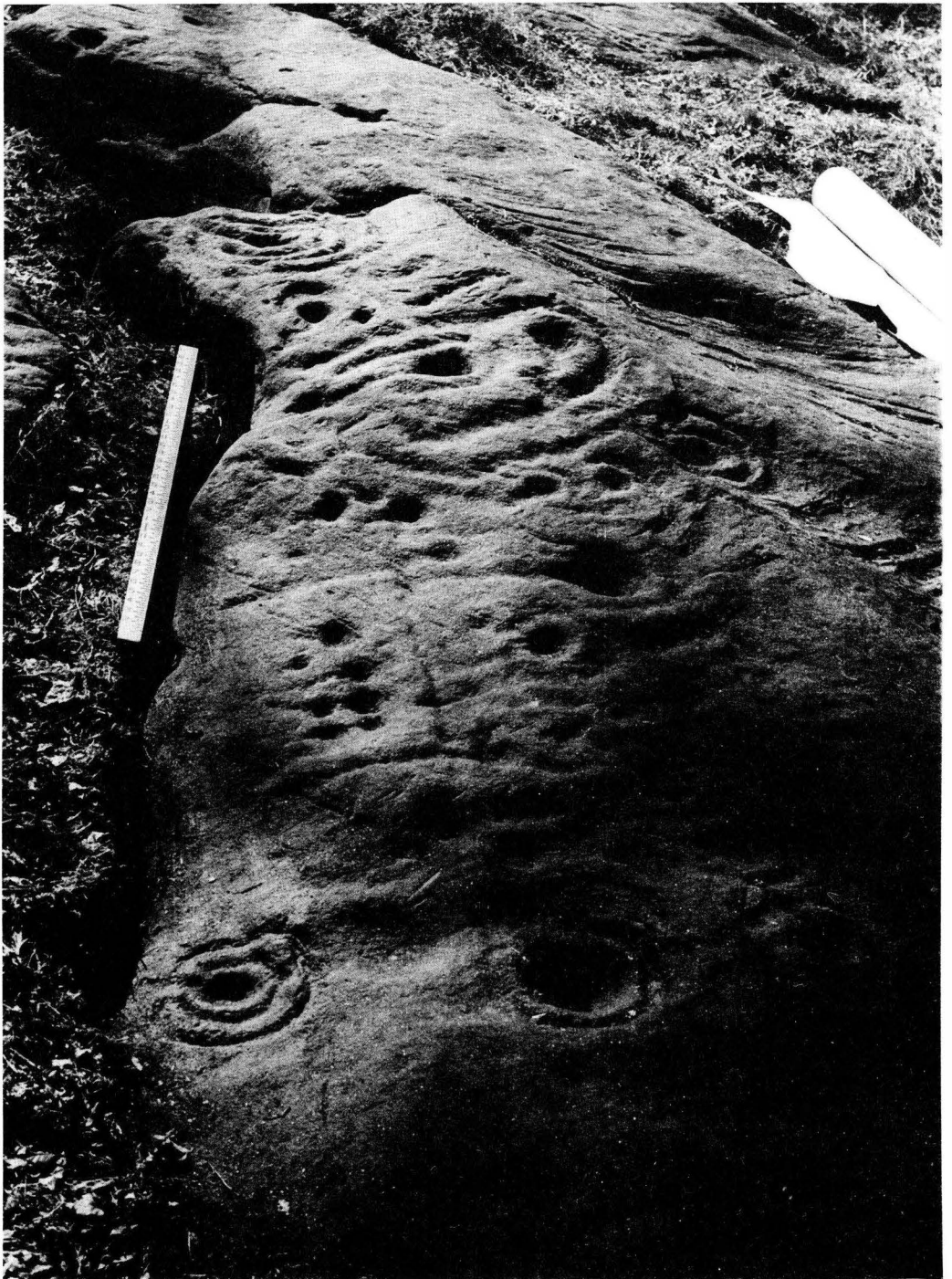


Fig. 3: *Fowberry Moor*. The design on the largest rock includes a rectangle containing cups. A good sense of “material” in the variety of design. (Scale: inches).



Fig. 4: *Fowberry Moor*. It appears that a deep design has been superimposed on shallow concentric circles around a cup.



Fig. 5: *Fowberry Moor Enclosure*. A unique design: a grid pattern. There is also a “boss” instead of a central cup in one figure. (Scale: box is 6 cm x 4 cm).



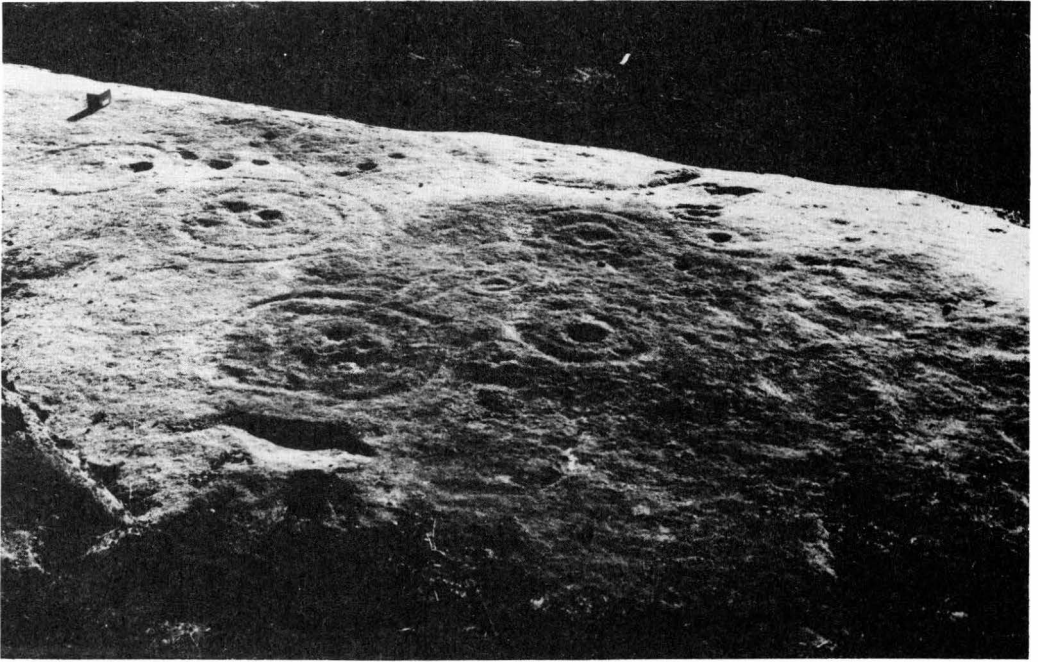


Fig. 6a:

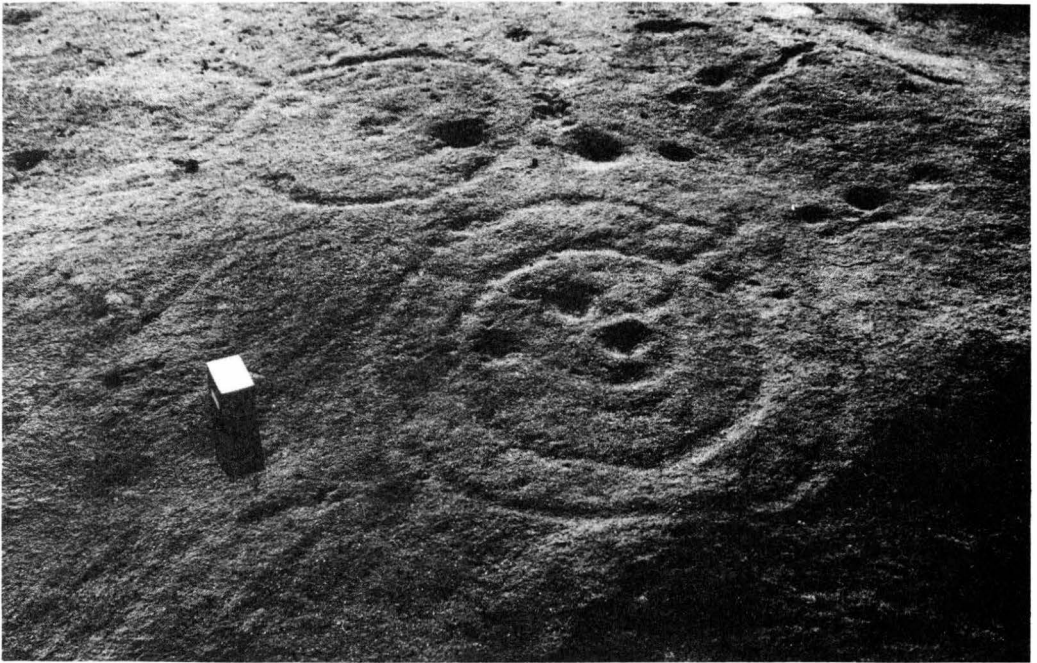
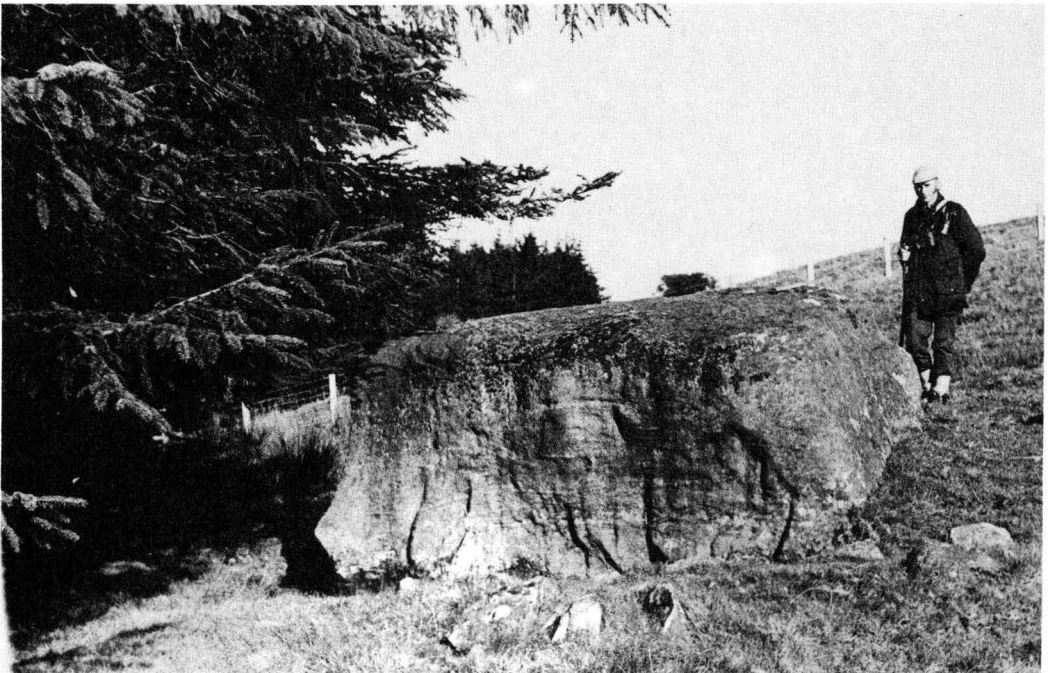


Fig. 6: *Amersidelaw Moor*. (a) A very unusual rectangle inside a rectangle, with a semi-circle of cups. (b, c) Carvings on the largest rock. (Scale: box is 6 cm x 4 cm).

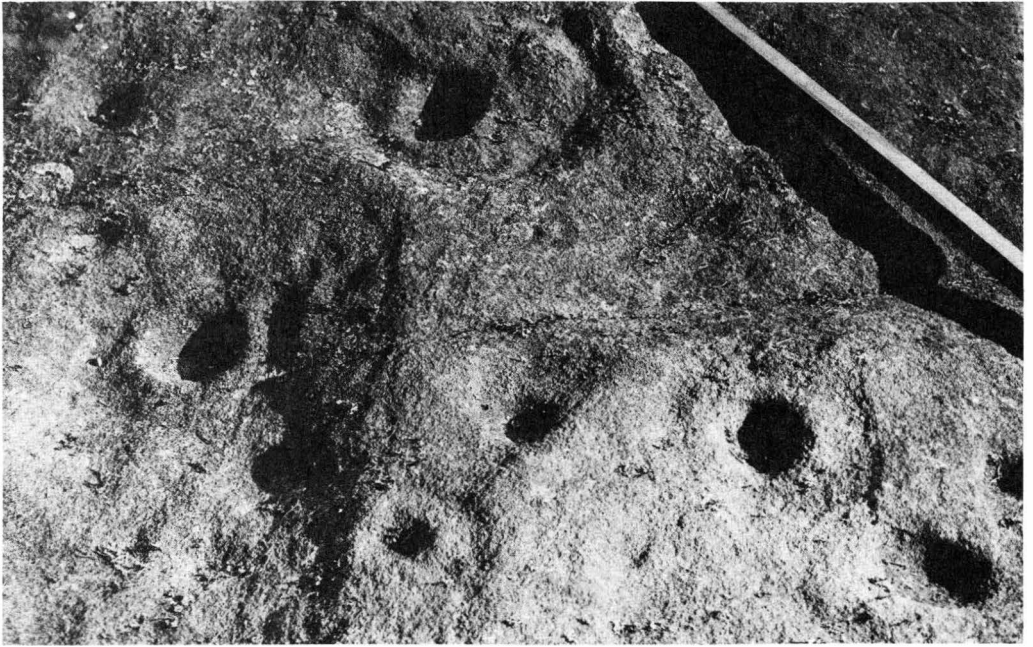


6c



7a

Fig. 7: *Rothley Crag*s. (a) A large, isolated block of sandstone. (b) Simple carvings on its top surface. Mostly cups, some with a single ring.



7b

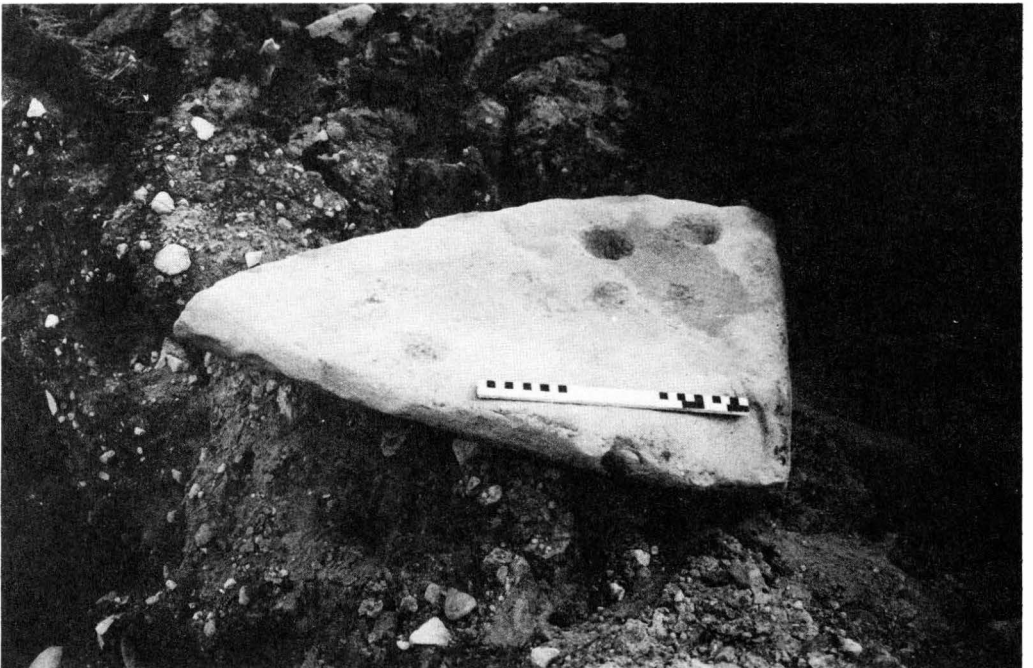


Fig. 8: *Hepburn Moor*. A triangular stone, with 6 well-defined pick-marked cups.



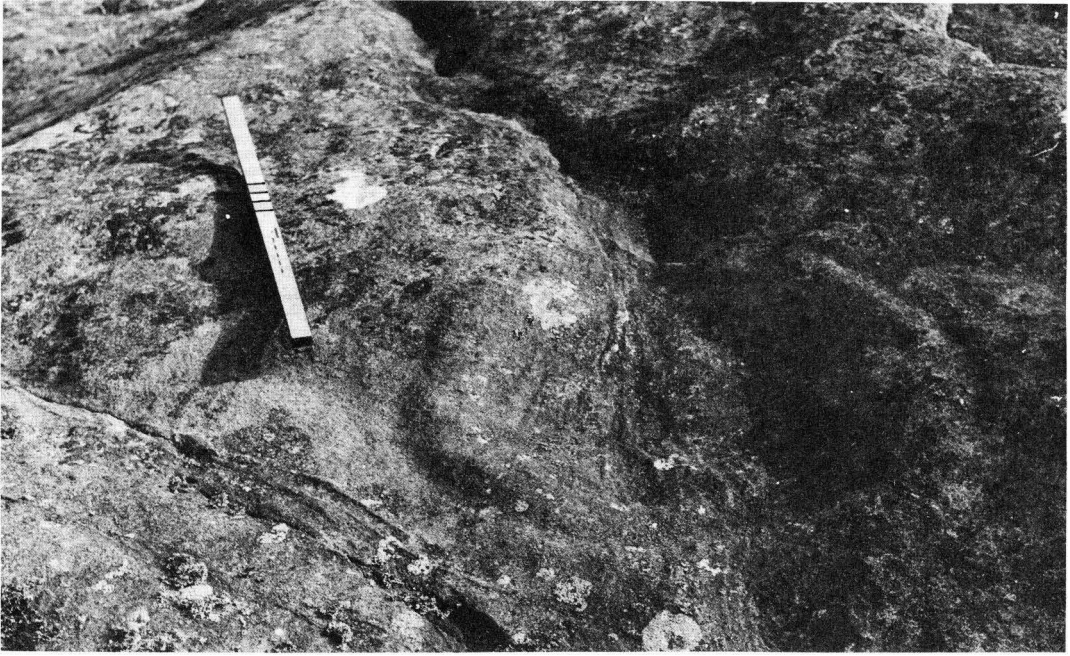


Fig. 9: *Corby Crag*. A Basin, groove and channel carved on the top surface of a rock shelter that contained a cremation burial.

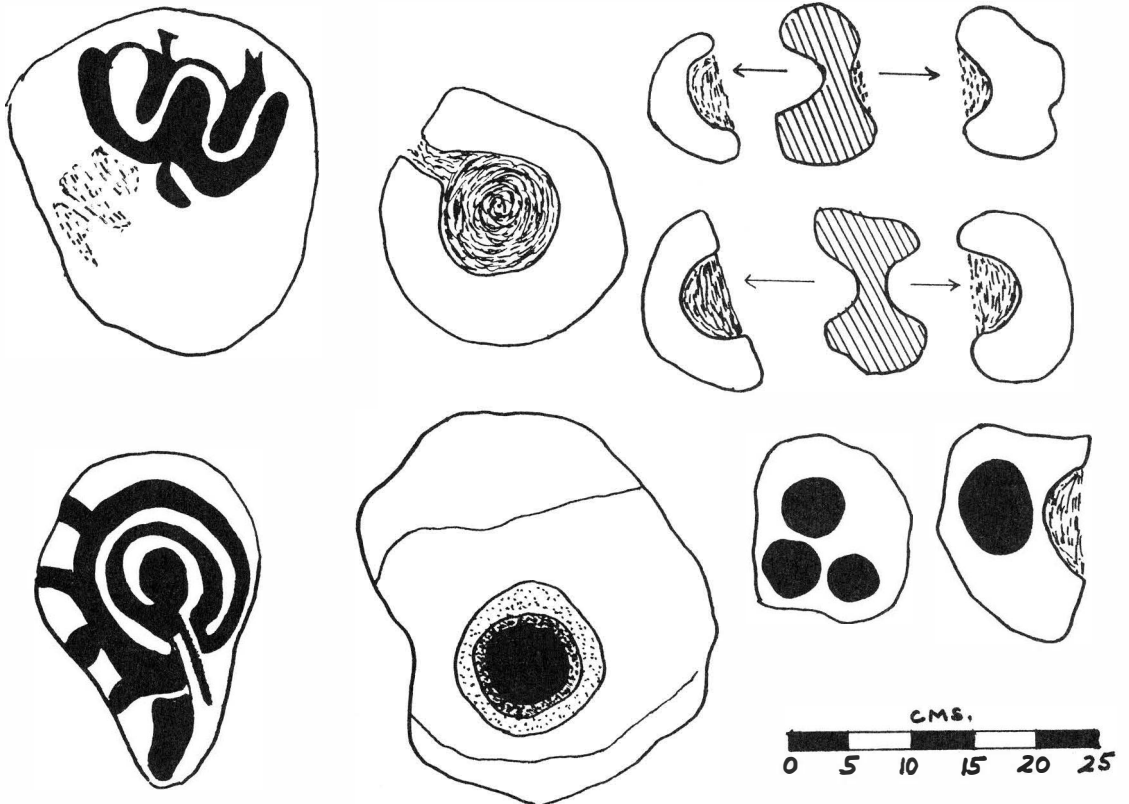


Fig. 10: *Fowberry Moor*. Some of the carved stones from the burial mound.

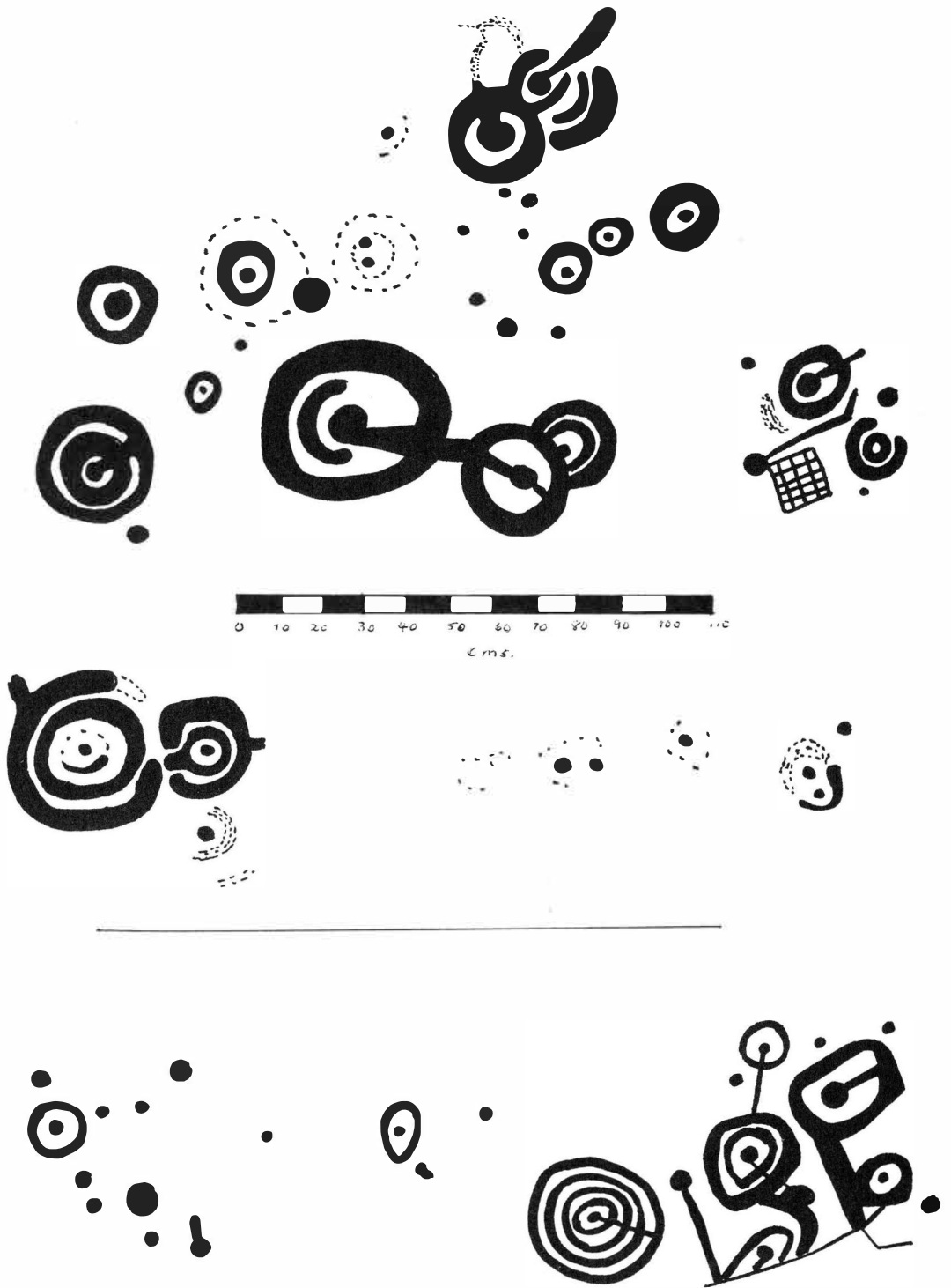


Fig. 11: *Fowberry Moor Enclosure*. The whole area of carvings.

AMERSIDELAW MOOR

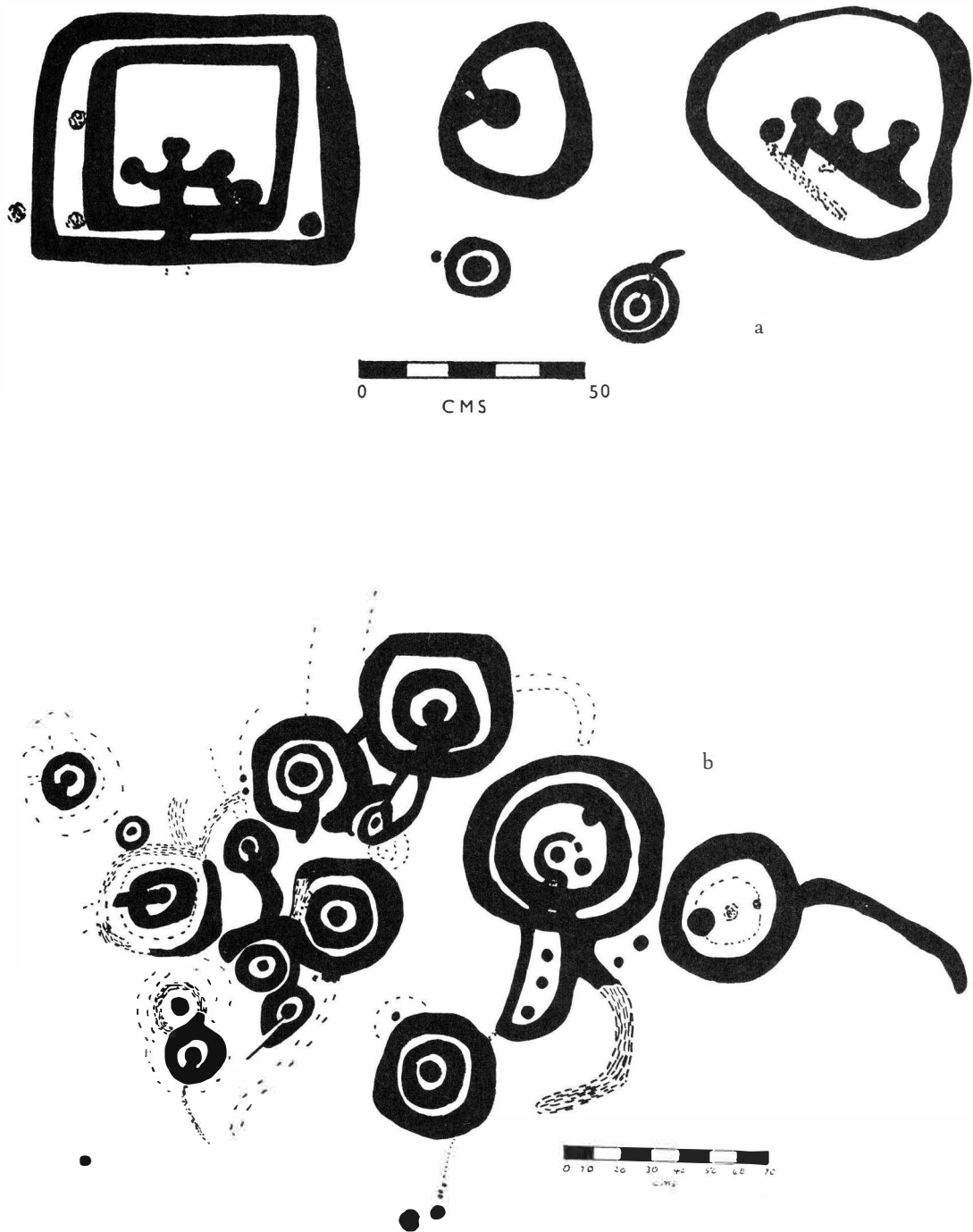


Fig. 12: *Amersidelaw Moor*. (a) A very interesting group. (b) Carvings on a horizontal outcrop.

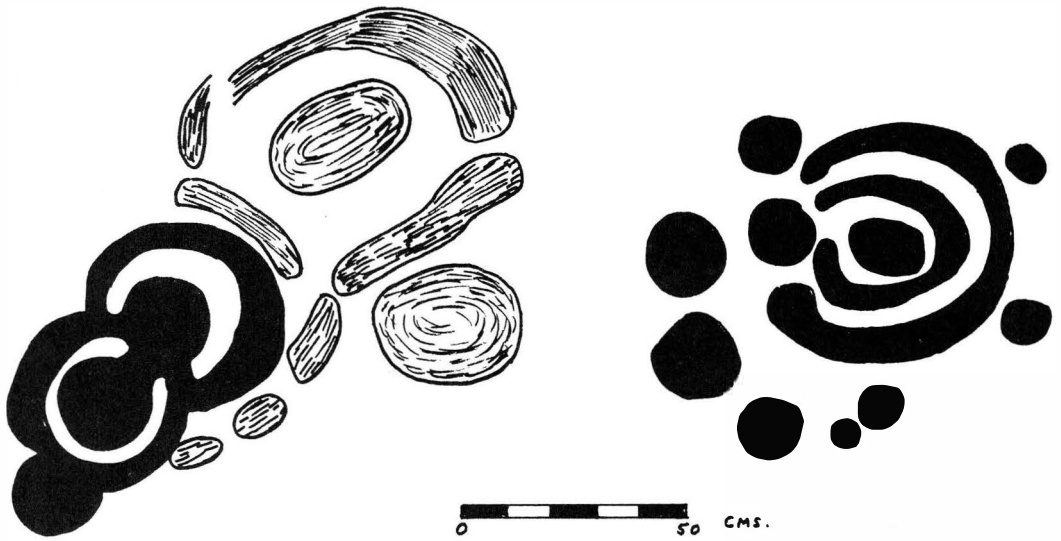
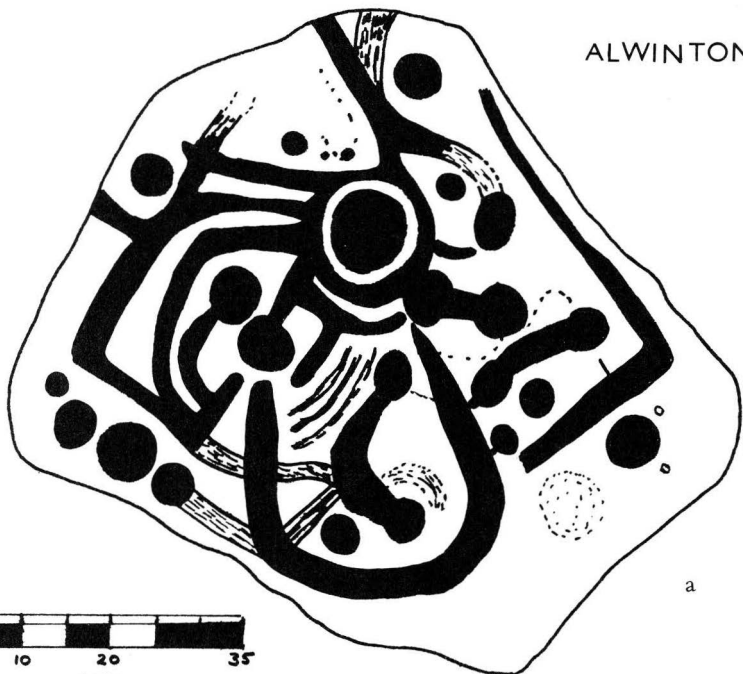


Fig. 13: *Scrainwood*. Some carvings are shallower than others on the same rock.



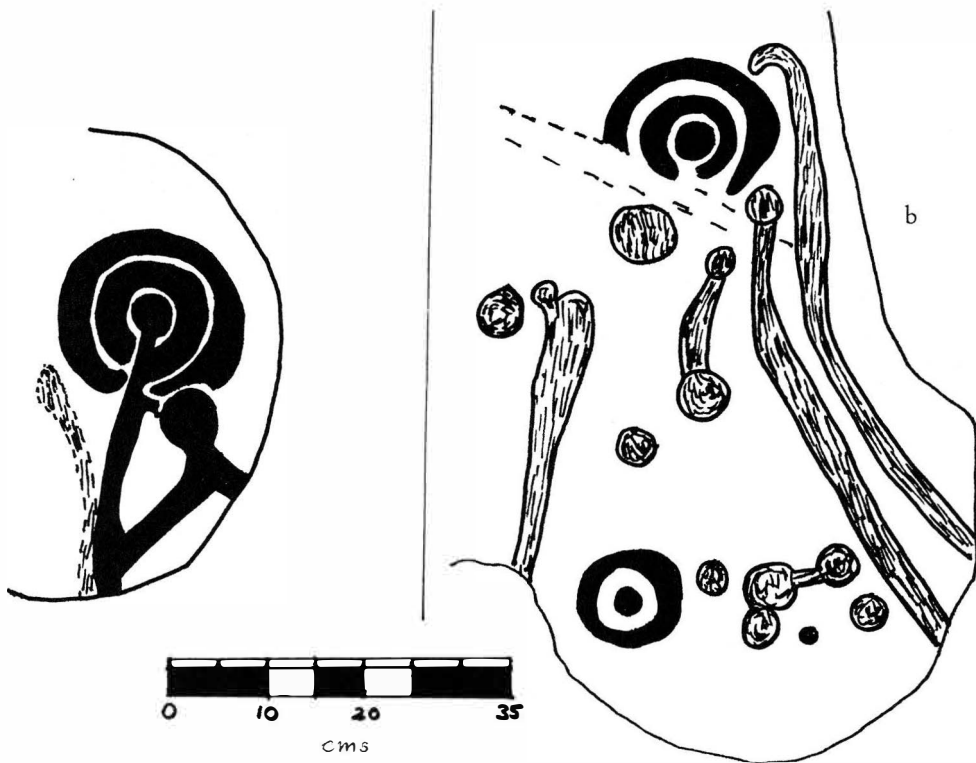


Fig. 14: *Alwinton*. (a) A boulder displaced by field clearance. (b) Two rocks that have been moved from their original position.

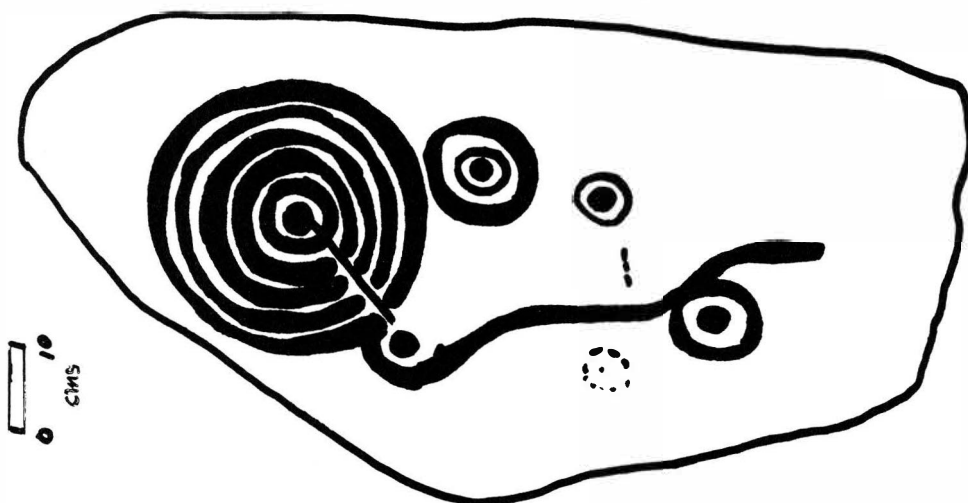


Fig. 15: *Oakwood Stone Hexham*. This good design now rests in the church of St. John Lee.



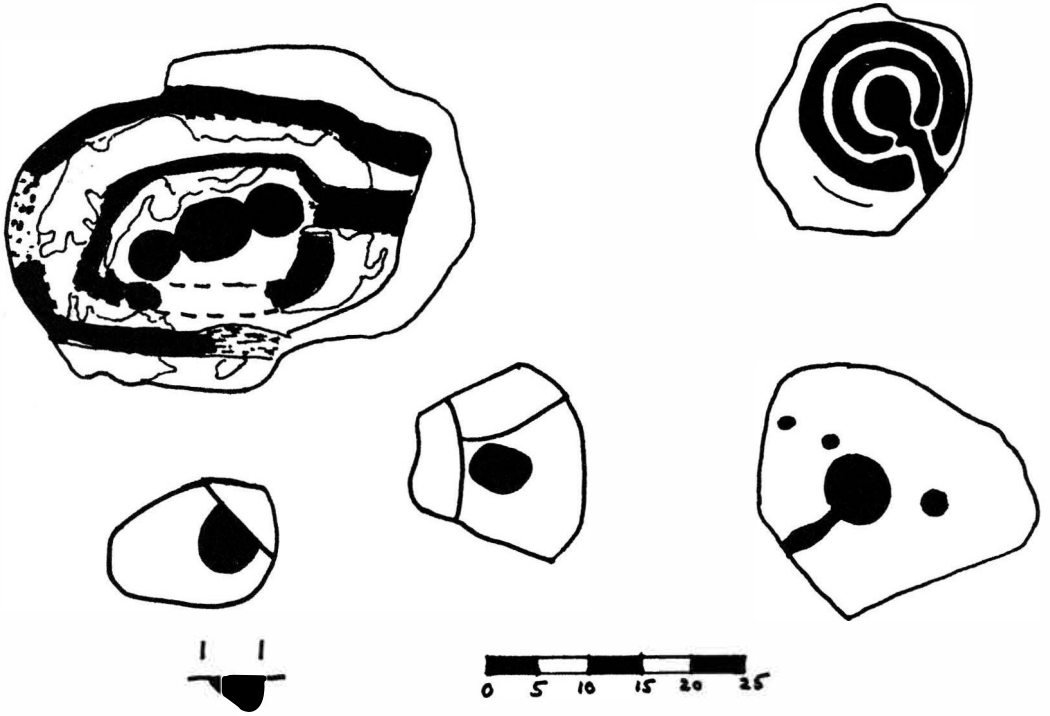


Fig. 16: *Small Stones*. From various sites, perhaps from destroyed mounds.

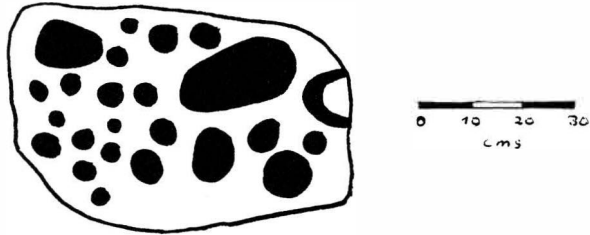


Fig. 17: *The Knitsley Stone*. From County Durham.

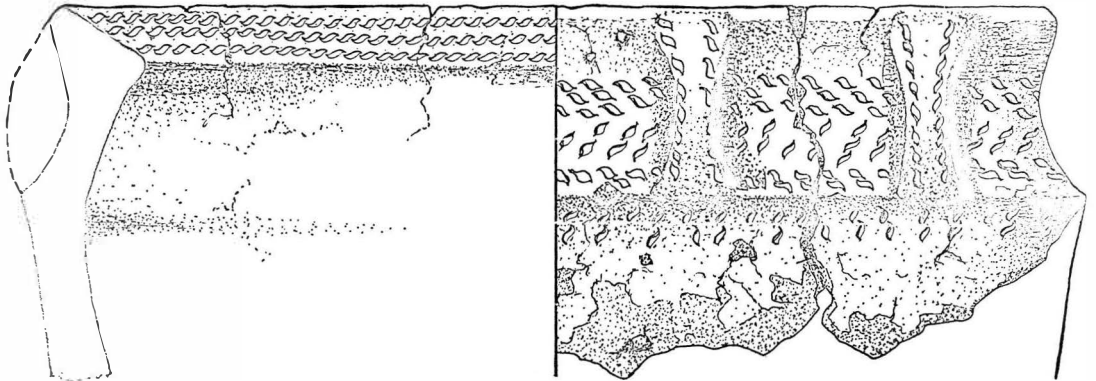


Fig. 18: *The Corby Craggs*. Cinerary urn.