



## **BRAG 2014**

Saturday 3 May

School of History, Classics and Archaeology, University of Edinburgh

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### **ABSTRACTS FOR PRESENTATIONS**

#### **Rethinking Neolithic art and architecture in Orkney**

Antonia Thomas, Archaeology Department, University of the Highlands and Islands, Orkney College  
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The ceremonial monuments of Neolithic Orkney are world famous, but until recently, relatively little has been known about the decoration of these sites. Nevertheless, Orkney is home to a substantial resource of prehistoric carvings, with many *in situ* designs known in both funerary and domestic contexts. The closest parallels are with Irish passage-grave art, but the Orkney examples form a distinctive group of their own.

Since 2006, excavations at the Ness of Brodgar by the Orkney Research Centre for Archaeology (ORCA) have been revealing a spectacular complex of structures which are redefining our understanding of the period. These monumental buildings exhibit features seen in many Orcadian Neolithic houses, but far exceed a domestic scale. Architectural elements more ordinarily associated with ceremonial sites, such as standing stones, further suggest a site which transcends the ordinary. To date, over 600 examples of incised, pecked, cup-marked and pick-dressed stone have been recovered from the site, many of which were found *in situ* within the buildings. This paper reviews the new discoveries of decorated and dressed architectural stone recovered from the excavations at the Ness of Brodgar and discusses these in the context of comparable material from Orkney.

#### **Rock art in south-east Scotland revisited**

Trevor Cowie, Scottish History and Archaeology Department, National Museums Scotland  
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When it appeared as a British Archaeological Report in 1981, *Prehistoric Rock Art of Southern Scotland* marked the final stage of the publication of Ronald Morris's ground-breaking surveys of the rock art of the region. The Edinburgh BRAG meeting provides an opportunity for a critical review of the inventory of rock art compiled by Morris for south-east Scotland, and to draw attention to subsequent discoveries. Although neither the Lothians nor the Scottish Borders are particularly renowned for their rock art, the historiography of the study of the subject is of some interest as local discoveries piqued the interest of several well-known Scottish antiquaries during the later 19th and early 20th centuries.

#### **Discovering Scottish rock art**

George Currie, Independent Researcher, Scotland  
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This talk outlines a long term rock art recording and research project in a well-defined area of upland Perthshire, including descriptions, comparisons and distinguishing features of some of the marked rocks in that area.



### **The Rhu Arisaig incised stone: now you see it, now you don't**

Ken Bowker, Independent Researcher, Scotland

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During the spring of 2013 a group from the Arisaig area started a walkover survey of the Rhu Arisaig Peninsula in north-west Scotland. They found something that no-one had expected – an incised Neolithic stone.

### **Rocking around the Watershed Landscape: volunteers at the heart of rock art research in the South Pennines**

Louise Brown<sup>1</sup>, Tertia Barnett<sup>2</sup>, Kate Sharpe<sup>3</sup>, Richard Stroud<sup>4</sup>

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During the course of the Watershed Landscape Project (2010–2013), a team of dedicated volunteers recorded the condition of almost 500 carved stones across Rombalds Moor, near Ilkley, West Yorkshire. The Carved Stone Investigation (CSI): Rombalds Moor team made detailed records of each of the stones, not only recording the carving and location, but also proximity to other archaeological features, and their current condition. These records will not only help to monitor any changes in the conditions of the carvings, but also create a permanent record of what they once looked like for future study and research. Volunteers are continuing to monitor the condition of the carved stones with the aid of a mobile-friendly form.

The project was funded by the Heritage Lottery Partnerships Programme and South Pennines LEADER, and managed by southern pennines rural regeneration company Pennine Prospects.

[www.watershedlandscape.co.uk](http://www.watershedlandscape.co.uk) and [www.pennineprospects.co.uk](http://www.pennineprospects.co.uk)

### **Expanded results in the CARE of rock art in the UK and Ireland**

David Graham<sup>1</sup>, Patricia Warke<sup>2</sup>, Myra Giesen<sup>1</sup>, Aron Mazel<sup>1</sup> and Peter Lewis<sup>1</sup>

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Last year at BRAG, we introduced the research project "Heritage and Science: Working Together in the CARE of Rock Art". Early scientific investigations showed that specific local conditions correlate with higher levels of stone deterioration that appears to be accelerating due broader environmental change. Specifically, field data and climate modelling suggested that rock art in Northumberland has potentially deteriorated more over the last 60 years than over the preceding ca. 6000 years (Giesen et al. 2013). This year we provide expanded results from fieldwork in Northumberland, SW Scotland, and the Republic of Ireland, which further links micro-environmental conditions and the relative deterioration of the rock art. This new work includes assessing rock mineralogy and stone weathering using X-ray Fluorescence (XRF) techniques, and contrasting XRF and soil composition data at different locations with apparent levels of stone deterioration (defined a rock "stage"; Warke et al. 2003). Results will be highlighted in this presentation, which includes work funded by the Science and Heritage Programme at the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council.



### **Rock-art landscapes beside the Jubbah Palaeolake, North West Saudi Arabia**

Richard Jennings, Research Laboratory for Archaeology, Oxford University

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A rock art survey of four jebels beside Jubbah Palaeolake in the Nefud desert of north-central Saudi Arabia was undertaken in order to interpret rock-art distributions in their environmental setting. The four jebels are located east and south of Jebel Umm Sanman, one of the most significant localities of rock art in the Arabian Peninsula. The survey systematically recorded 107 sites within a GIS framework, including late prehistoric depictions of ibex, cattle and humans, and more recent Thamudic inscriptions and depictions of camel, horse and ostrich. Spatial analyses of the dataset indicated that the majority of late prehistoric sites overlooked palaeolake deposits and therefore probably relate to early Neolithic occupation when the habitat was wetter than today and when cattle perhaps grazed the Jubbah lakeshore. Thamudic distribution patterns in contrast reflected transient nomads or traders moving through the jebels in a drier environment and leaving visible and accessible depictions of camels and Thamudic writing on rocks at the jebel bases.

### **Rock art in Northern England: updates from the east and new plans for the west**

Kate Sharpe, Durham University

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In this brief update I hope to share some good and some less good news regarding rock art across Northern England.

### **Making a mark on North African rock art**

Tertia Barnett, Edinburgh University

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Paintings and engravings are a common feature of the Saharan landscape in North Africa. Several distinct rock art 'traditions' have been recognised, and these are generally thought to have been created over the last 8000 years. This talk focuses on one particular engraving tradition known as Tazina, which occurs in the Central and North Western Sahara. Tazina carvings have a number of distinctive and well-documented features. However, this tradition is also associated with extensive anthropogenic markings on the rock surfaces which are not included in discussions on the rock art. The markings have a range of forms, including pecking, polishing, grooving, hollowing and scraping, which result from different actions and interactions with the rock surface. This talk explores why these markings relate exclusively to the Tazina tradition, and sets out some ideas for the actions and intentionality behind the markings.

### **Prehistoric rock art of Sardinia: continuity or regional traditions?**

Cezary Namirski, Durham University

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The prehistoric rock art of Sardinia occurs in various contexts – the carved and painted motifs decorate *domus de janas* (Neolithic-Chalcolithic rock cut tombs), natural caves, Chalcolithic statue-stele and standing stones. The rock art can be found also on the outcrops and boulders in the landscape, while the recent research has revealed incisions on the Bronze Age nuraghi (conical-shaped stone towers). So far



the rock art in specific types of contexts has been studied in isolation, with particular emphasis on statue-stele (Saba 1999, Murru 2001) and *domus de janas* (Meloni 2008), less attention has been paid to rock art in the landscape. This methodology of studying rock art in different contexts separately has led to lack of wider perspective on the development of rock art in Sardinia.

This paper will be an attempt to answer the question whether it is possible to observe continuity in the Sardinian rock art or is it rather a set of regional traditions from different periods. I will also try to place the Sardinian rock art within a wider context of the Central Mediterranean, Alpine and Atlantic European rock art.

### **Ughtasar Rock Art Project and 'Picture Viewer'**

Tina and Richard Walkling, Independent Researchers

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Ughtasar Rock Art Project, initiated in 2009, involves a systematic survey of the petroglyphs and other archaeological features within the caldera of an extinct volcano, 3300m high in the Syunik Mountains of Armenia. 840 rocks bearing abstract and figurative motifs pecked onto basalt boulders have been recorded so far. The main aim of the project is to further understanding of the significance of Ughtasar to the people who created the petroglyphs and the ways in which they 'marked' this special place.

Vital to the success of the Project is the management and presentation of data for subsequent analysis and interpretation. The data amassed so far comprises paper records of each carved panel, GPS co-ordinates and over 10,000 digital photographs. All data has been entered into an Excel spreadsheet database with automated search facilities and results presented on a map. The spreadsheet format allows all team members access to the data and the basic analysis features.

To supplement the database, 'Picture Viewer' software, using Microsoft Visual Basic, has been developed for data analysis providing access to all photographs and records, searching of the database, preparation of edited lists, and the addition of user's post-fieldwork notes to each record. The software runs on any laptop or PC. Please try out 'Picture Viewer' for your selves during the breaks!

### **Smartphone applications and rock art: methods of surveying and engaging - an example**

Louise Felding, VejleMuseerne Erhverv og Kultur Vejle Kommune

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By using the open sourced smartphone application EpiCollect it is possible to collect and share data worldwide. I have started a project recording information on Rock Art and invite anyone interested to join. The idea is to create an overview of rock art locations supplied with a brief description, photo and gps log. The collected data will be synchronized online so all data can be viewed on a map service with the recorded data available for all users.

It is a useful tool for walkover surveys and data logging but also serves as a great source of inspiration if you want to share your favourite sites with others. For further details please visit:

<http://www.bricksite.com/lufelding/rockartcollect>



### **Colour in the mountains: the distribution of shaded polychromes in the uKhahlamba-Drakensberg mountains in South Africa**

Aron Mazel, International Centre for Cultural and Heritage Studies, Newcastle University

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New information generated during the last two decades has allowed us to conclude that the shaded polychrome paintings of the uKhahlamba-Drakensberg mountains were not done during the last few hundred years as previously believed, but instead that they were first produced in the mountains around 2000 years ago and, with few exceptions, lasted until 1600 years ago. Furthermore, it has been argued that these paintings relate to a phase of hunter-gatherer history which was characterised by increased stress and ritual activity associated with substantial social and cultural changes that resulted from the movement of agriculturist communities into southern Africa. Shaded polychrome paintings occur along the length of the uKhahlamba-Drakensberg mountains from Royal Natal National Park in the north to Bushman's Nek in the south. This paper will explore the distribution of these paintings with a view to establishing whether there were particular areas where shaded polychromes were more prevalent and how this might relate to hunter-gatherer history in the uKhahlamba-Drakensberg.

### **Destabilising the universality of art/shamanism: from cave painting to the white cube**

Robert J. Wallis, Richmond, The American International University in London

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Art and shamanism are often represented as timeless, universal features of human experience, with an apparently immutable relationship. Shamanism is frequently held to represent the origin of religion and shamans are frequently characterized as the first artists, leaving their infamous mark in the cave art of Upper Palaeolithic Europe. Despite a disconnect of several millennia, modern artists too, from Wassily Kandinsky and Vincent van Gogh, to Joseph Beuys and Marcus Coates, have been labelled as inspired visionaries who access the trance-like states of shamans, and these artists of the 'white cube' or gallery setting are cited as the inheritors of an enduring tradition of shamanic art.

Recent scholarship on rock art contributes to this discourse in rational-materialist 'neurotheological' terms, locating image production and visionary experience as universal brain events. But the history of thinking on art and shamanism shows these concepts are not unchanging, timeless universals; they are constructed, historically situated and contentious. I examine how art and shamanism have been conceived and their relationship entangled from the late Renaissance to the present, focussing on the interpretation of Upper Palaeolithic cave art in the first half of the twentieth century – a key moment in this trajectory – to illustrate my case.

### **Breaking the house rules: the politics and grammar of disrespecting contemporary graffiti**

George Nash, Department of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Bristol

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Within the contemporary graffiti world there is an unwritten rule that no deliberate or onerous defacing or superimposition from one graffiti statement should occur over another. This rule appears to have been strictly adhered to since street art/graffiti's inception during the early 1970s within the urban ghettos of the Eastern Seaboard of the United States. Within the anthropological and ethnographic



record such superimposition is usually accepted and is considered a passive addition or enhancement to the original visual statement. Over the past five years a graffiti conflict has been simmering between what is termed legitimate street artists and those graffiti artists who have become established and have embraced celebrity status. The result of this conflict has been the wholesale defacing and destruction of a number of graffiti panels, thus breaking the house rules. In this paper I will explore and discuss the underlying tensions between the various factions that have led to this unorthodox behaviour between those graffiti artists who are considered *legit* and those who have *sold out*.

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## POSTERS AND INTERACTIVE SESSIONS

### Discoveries of the Camonica Valley

Francesca Frapanni (presented by Stefani Sansoni)  
Camunian Centre of Prehistory Studies, Valle Camonica

The traditional archaeological campaign ended this summer with new finds and important confirmations. The team of the Camunian Centre of Prehistory Studies, led by Umberto Sansoni, focused investigations on the rocky areas of "Foppe di Nadro" and the nearby "Boscattelle", inside the "Nature Reserve of rock engravings of Ceto, Cimbergo and Paspardo". We obtained important results, especially with regard to the most ancient periods (final Neolithic-Chalcolithic) and to the middle stages of the Iron Age.

### Management of the Valle Camonica rock art

Luca Giarelli (President)  
Riserva naturale Incisioni Rupestri di Ceto, Cimbergo e Paspardo

The Valle Camonica rock art has been a UNESCO site since 1979. The first rock carvings were reported in 1909, but today new engravings are still being discovered. This heritage is facing several challenges: the governance, the preservation, the touristic attractiveness, the research. The aim of this article is to illustrate the main Valle Camonica UNESCO site issues and reveal in advance some management guidelines.

### The 'Heritage and science: working together in the CARE of rock art' project

Peter Lewis<sup>1</sup>, Myra Giesen<sup>1</sup>, Aron Mazel<sup>1</sup>, David Graham<sup>1</sup>, and Patricia Warke<sup>2</sup>  
<sup>1</sup>Newcastle University, <sup>2</sup>Queens University Belfast

This poster provides an overview of the "Heritage and Science: Working Together in the CARE of Rock Art" Project, which was funded by the Science and Heritage Programme at the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council. It provides the rationale behind the project, and outlines how we integrated scientific inquiry in the co-produce of a toolkit to evaluate rock art for condition assessment and risk evaluations (CARE) variables. It discusses the co-production process and the various stakeholders who were included in it. It further describes the "how to" management guide that was developed to accompany the toolkit. Finally, it highlights the range of project-related outputs, and the media outlets being employed to disseminate these materials to raise the awareness of rock art on a general level.



### **The story of the Heights of Fodderty Stone**

Susan Kruse and John Wombell

Archaeology for Communities in the Highlands, and North of Scotland Archaeology Society

### **Northern Rock Art Project**

John Wombell

North of Scotland Archaeology Society

Following the success of the Ross-shire Rock Art Project, the North of Scotland Archaeological Society proposes to move ahead with a North of Scotland Rock Art Project that takes in the remainder of the Highland administrative area plus the Moray and Aberdeenshire administrative areas. Several forays into these areas have already shown that similar public record problems exist – stones long lost, false identification and duplicate records. In addition to updating and improving the existing records, experience to date shows that there is also the potential to at least double the number of panels through informed prospection. The rock art of the North of Scotland could number as many as 500 panels and shows great variety in both style and distribution.

### **Ecological perspectives on new rock art discoveries at Shuwaymis, Saudi Arabia**

Richard Jennings

Research Laboratory for Archaeology, University of Oxford

A high-resolution survey of a sector of the Shuwaymis rock-art complex in NW Saudi Arabia was undertaken to shed new light on prehistoric occupation in the area. The survey, the first of its kind for Shuwaymis, saw the application of a differential GPS to record 190 rock art panels over an 800m long section of a sandstone escarpment. Here we examine the panels from an ecological perspective and provide new insights into the environment of Arabia in late prehistory. Three main styles are present: late prehistoric (c.10-6 ka), which is dominated by bovid, felid, equid, ibex, wild goat, dog, hyaena, deer and human depictions; Iron Age (c.3-1.5ka) which contains images of camel, ibex, equid, dog, ostrich, humans, as well as Thamudic scripts; and more recent rock art, which is dominated by horses, camels with riders, tribal symbols and Arabic script. Our results support hypotheses that late Prehistoric rock art derives from the Early Holocene humid phase, when the Shuwaymis area would have been part of a savannah environment, and that Iron Age rock art represents an adaptation to arid environments by mobile human populations in the region.

### **Rock carvings in 3D, documentation and analysis**

Mette Rabitz

Independent Researcher

### **Ughtasar Rock Art Project 'Picture Viewer'**

Tina and Richard Walkling

Independent Researchers

An interactive session exploring the Picture Viewer programme developed for the Ughtasar Rock Art Project. The 'Picture Viewer' software has been developed using Microsoft Visual Basic for data analysis, providing access to all photographs and records, searching of the database, preparation of edited lists, and the addition of user's post-fieldwork notes to each record. The software runs on any laptop or PC.



### **England's Rock Art (ERA) website and database**

Kate Sharpe  
Durham University

An interactive session exploring the national database and website for rock art in England. The database currently holds detailed records for around 2000 carved panels from Northumberland, Co Durham and Rombalds Moor in West Yorkshire gathered by specialist amateurs and trained volunteers. The records incorporate the Becakensall Archive, compiled by Stan Beckensall over several decades, and the results of the Northumberland and Durham Rock Art Project and the recently completed Carved Stones Investigations: Rombalds Moor Project.

### **Experimental rock carving workshop**

Andy McFetters  
Professional Sculptor

This 15 minute workshop with an experienced stone sculptor will demonstrate and discuss rock carving techniques using a range of materials and methods. The workshop will be run outside in a location close to the conference venue.