SOUTH AFRICAN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

GNEWS

KwaZulu-Natal Branch Newsletter

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NOTES

Here at last is the next volume of Gnews, which I have been promised for many months now. Once again, I offer apologies. This volume includes material that I have gathered since March 2003. In the next and subsequently volumes, I will continue to try catch up with reporting on interesting things we did during the last two years.

You'll note from the top of this page that the name of the branch has changed: from Natal to KwaZulu-Natal Branch. This change was proposed at the 2004 AGM and accepted by the Society Council during the course of the year.

Penny Letley writes:

We were fortunate to gain some members from other branches during the past year or so, and would like to welcome Mr and Mrs Holt-Biddle who have relocated to the lower South Coast, and Mr and Mrs Daly who are now living in Himeville. New members of both Branch and Society include the Govender family of Melmoth, Brian Crossley (Gillitts), Claire Donaldson (Merrivale), Mark Marais (Umzinto), and Samantha Terblanche of the Wildlands Trust.

The Natal Museum contingent of members has increased since the beginning of 2004 with the arrival of Marlize Lombard and Bronwen van Doornum, both ex-Trans-Vaal Branch, and Dr Judith Masters, and McEdward and Mercy Murimbika, who have recently become members. We regret having had to say goodbye to Joané Swart who has moved to Stellenbosch with her husband Justin. They are expecting their first child (a boy) next month, and our congratulations and best wishes go with them. Hopefully Joané will be able to pursue her rock art studies once they are settled – perhaps she will be able to visit us as a guest speaker!

Speaking of babies, those of you who knew Annie van der Venter (a former committee member) will be pleased to hear that Annie was married to Philip Radford in the UK early in 2004, and their baby was due at the end of March, so we are waiting anxiously to hear from her.

Mr and Mrs Booth were transferred to the Trans-Vaal Branch and regrettably, a number (five) of members have resigned. It is with regret that we record that Mr D. Cain of Durban died in November 2004.

Other branch news

Trans-Vaal Branch have announced that they will shortly be making use of new lecture facilities at Roedean Girls' School in Parktown. This will be a permanent arrangement. Their Annual General Meeting will be held on 19 May 2005, when there will be an address by Dr Ben Smith of the Rock Art Research Institute. Other talks and excursions planned for the year include the ecology and history of the Magaliesberg (10 April), African Linguistics (14 April), Gerachsloop Mission Station (15 May), Australopethicus, animals and art (9 June), Mapungubwe excursion (16 – 19 June), West Fort and other sites (17 July), the archaeology of graffiti (21 July), Ethiopian Hominid Discoveries (PAST public lecture at WITS, 25 July) and a lecture by Dr Dan Bahat (4 August).

PAST EVENTS

A visit to Phasi Museum, 15 March 2003 by Chrissie Sievers

Phansi Museum in rambling Roberts House is an absolute treasure trove of beadwork, basketwork, wooden headrests, meat platters and spoons, pottery and many, many other fascinating artifacts like dancing sticks and earplugs. We were fortunate to be introduced to the collection by both the founder and owner of the Museum, Paul Mikula, and Phumzile Nkosi-Dlomo, the official guide.

As one descends into the Alladin's cave, one is greeted by a wall of spectacular bowls woven from coloured telephone wire. Examples on display show the development from a simple woven grass storage jar covering, to the introduction of a few beads as decoration, later wool as a cheaper substitute, then strips of coloured plastic packets and finally, telephone wire. The infinite variety of pattern and combination of colours gave us just a taste of the fascinating artifacts ahead.

It is difficult to do justice to the beauty and variety of beadwork on display, and the wealth of information and symbolism intrinsic to the work. Thus one can decipher not only clan affiliations, or the approximate date of manufacture, but also, for example, the added messages in the images of a car, probably a 1960s Valiant, and a transistor radio woven into the beaded decoration of a wedding cape. The incorporation of not only modern images but modern material too, is interesting. A spectacular shawl on display is decorated with safety pins and budgie-mirrors. Further examples are the use of plastic beads, particularly in the Valley of a Thousand Hills Valley (the source of the safety pin shawl too) and the plastic of old bus seats used to make mens' back aprons. Changing availability of materials and fashion is also evidenced in the large collection of earplugs. The earlier ones are of intricate patterns of vinyl attached to wooden discs by gramophone needles; later ones are decorated with Perspex so that the patterns are of necessity simpler and bolder (it is a more difficult material to work and the colours are brighter). Earplugs are a sign of manhood and the size of some from the Msinga area are impressive. Whereas the use of earplugs has largely died out, except among the Shembe, beadwork has not. However, not much early material remains as beads were and are, often re-used (just as diamond jewellery is frequently reset).

Pipes and snuff boxes are also on display. Apparently the length of a woman's pipe was directly proportional to her importance. With men, the pipe was often made to be as amusing as for example the displayed pipes in the shape of a shoe or a car. The pipes are mostly Xhosa and Sotho, whereas snuff-taking rather than smoking, appears to be a feature of the Zulu and Pondo's. The snuffboxes are delicate, intricate and beautiful and the snuff spoons which can double up as efficient head-scratchers, are objects d'art too.

The overlap of function and aesthetics is particularly evident in the love letters, necklaces whose rectangular pendants had a specific communication function either between lovers (who were not meant to communicate directly), between family members or between

clan members. One such message we were shown was an enquiry from a bride-to-be to her groom, regarding the scheduled date for the nuptials, as she had forgotten the date. Paul suggested that this might have more of a slight nudge than a genuine slip of memory!

Human hair was used to make the traditional inverted-cone-shaped ochre coloured head-covering/hat of a married Zulu woman. The hair was not only from the wearer but also from family members. Thus, Phumzile says, there would be a receptacle for the collection of any contributions, and friends too, might bring some of their hair as wedding gifts. Unfortunately these hats have to a large degree been replaced by a variety of smaller head coverings (albeit attractive in their own right), mostly because the large traditional ones are a bit of a problem in crowded taxis.

Phumzile has an easy and engaging manner and shared many intriguing facts, gleaned both from her own experience and from visitors to the museum. Thus she could tell us about functional features, for example, the 'handles' on milkpails which enable men to secure the pails between their legs to prevent spillage in the event of an odd kick from a cow, the smooth tapered rims of drinking pots, and the narrow everted necks which prevent water from splashing of out of pots used for fetching and storing water. She told us too what an elderly crafter had told her about penis covers, namely that these were traditionally fitted by elderly women, who by inspecting a man's big toe, were able to estimate the correct size. The covers are woven of the leaves of the wild banana.

Paul, too, is a font of fascinating information. One of the many beguiling sequences he demonstrated through reference to examples of beadwork was the hypothetical life-story of an Ndebele woman. She is dressed to resemble a fertility doll when presented to her in-laws and the apron she wears is of beadwork backed by cardboard representing her 'closed' status. Her marriage apron is flexible and with broad flaps of beaded work hanging down, whereas the next apron is more like a curtain, reflecting her status as childbearing female and mother of a number of children. Paul explained the origin of the striking patterns of Ndebele beadwork and the spectacular painting of their huts as an attempt to maintain identity under conditions which were conspiring to bring about the complete disintegration of the Ndebele.

Unfortunately the outing to Phansi Museum was embarrassingly poorly attended, a great pity as both the collection and the fascinating insights into the uses and symbolism of the artifacts were a real treat. The attendance figures may indicate that the scheduling of the outing was unsuitable or perhaps that most members are not interested in ethnography, albeit from a historical perspective. Let us have your views.

KwaZulu-Natal Archaeological Research Seminar, 26 March 2004

This is an irregular event held at the Natal Museum, first initiated many years ago by Aron Mazel. Normally held shortly before a conference, it allows researchers to practice presenting their paper. This year Society members were invited. Several came, despite the difficulty of its timing in daytime work hours.

We were treated to a feast of papers from archaeologists, heritage managers, natural scientists, historians and land surveyors – anything at all connected in some way to archaeology. Fifteen people or groups read papers covering material ranging from microscopic residues on stone tools to books on the the history of the Ukhahlamba Drakensberg to efforts to map and create virtual recreations of painted rock shelters. The Natal Museum lecture theatre was jam packed, with some having to sit on the floor.

What was clear from the day is how multi-dimensional the discipline of archaeology is, how extensively it touches other areas of research and practice, even in this province where archaeology is not represented in the universities. This was vividly demonstrated by the number

of non-archaeologists presenting papers. Indeed, the day symbolised the penetration of the Natal Museum archaeologists into the wider community.

Excursion to Didima, 11 & 12 September 2004 by Joané Swart & Gavin Whitelaw

This was a well-attended excursion, by society members and visitors attracted by an advert in the newspaper. We met at a freeway petrol station in the Estcourt area before going on to visit the Hattingvlakte engraving site, which was declared a national monument under South Africa's old heritage legislation. The primary reason for its declaration are the many engravings which occur on dolerite boulders scattered on and around a prominent hill. Made by African farmers within the last 350 years, many depict homestead plans, some more detailed than others. In most, the male world (cattle pens, cattle tracks) is strongly emphasised; only a few have features associated with women, such as huts and granaries. It seems likely that the engravers were boys and male adolescents, and in the 1950s Malan photographed young boys playing 'house' on engravings near Muden.

A properly ordered homestead encapsulates all that is right about the world. By making and playing on the engravings, children learnt about the world in which they lived, while at the same time created that world by setting it in stone. In a broad sense, the engraving are truly maps, even though there is no evidence that they represented actual settlements. Like maps today, they made the world real in a formal codified way and so helped people move through it.

Also on Hattingsvlakte hill is a Moor Park-type site, probably occupied between 1300 and 1600 by Nguni-speaking farmers taking advantage of the hill's commanding view of the surrounding terrain. On the opposite side of the hill is a hint of a stone alignment that might have been used during the Anglo-Boer War of 1899–1901.

Didima (modern spelling of Ndedema) is a fairly new camp in the Cathedral Peak area of the Ukhahlamba-Drakensberg Park (UDP). The UDP consists of a landscape filled with hidden natural and cultural treasures, known for its exceptional beauty. It has been listed as South Africa's first cultural and environmental World Heritage Site in terms of the World Heritage Convention, making it one of the few World Heritage Sites having both natural and cultural resources of outstanding universal importance. As many know, its principal cultural resource is the hunter-gatherer rock art. The UDP is one of the most densely painted regions in Africa, if not the world. It contains some 550 known rock painting sites, which include over 40 000 individual recorded images. Archaeological evidence has shown the San and their ancestors lived in this area from about 8 000 years ago.

In the Cathedral Peak area of the UDP there is a place called Ndedema Gorge/Didima Gorge; a valley that contains a remarkable concentration of rock paintings. The sheer beauty of the art of the Ndedema Gorge was recognised by an Austrian born artist and designer, Harald Pager. In the 1960s Harald Pager and his wife, Shirley-Ann, recorded a total of 3909 individual images in 17 shelters. Pager photographed the paintings in black and white film, after which he

made life-size black and white prints. He then returned to Ndedema Gorge with these prints where he coloured the images with oil paints, working on an easel propped up in front of the paintings. Pager's copies were published in 1971 in a book entitled *Ndedema: a documentation of the rock paintings of the Ndedema Gorge.*

Ezemvelo's new Didima camp pays tribute to this special area. Its theme is the art itself, and to create an even greater understanding of the paintings of this area, Ezemvelo developed a San Art Interpretive Centre that provides fascinating insights into the art and culture of the San and their ancestors and includes static displays and audiovisual presentations within a threatre built to resemble a rock shelter.

The main theme of the Interpretive Centre is 'the eland', which is the most frequently depicted animal in San art. The interpretive display component of the Didima San Art Interpretive Centre draws the visitor through an emotional experience, using the eland and its significance in San culture as a vehicle. The eland theme runs throughout the static display area, concentrating on the relevance of the eland in rock art.

From a realistically modeled frieze of eland at the entrance, the visitor moves through displays that deal with the Early and Middle Stone Ages, to a time period around 15 000 years ago when the UDP area experienced a drop in temperature and people and the animals moved coastwards, to around 8 000 when people reoccupied the mountains. During this period the eland became an important symbol to the San and was viewed as an animal of power, with supernatural potency and great religious significance. This part of the display also focuses on the technology and food, dress and decoration, and rituals and religion of the San, and incorporates these aspects as they are displayed in the rock art.

An important part of the display is that which concerns the 'interaction period'. More recent paintings depict friendly interaction between the San and African and European migrant groups as well as conflict. Today the descendants of the artists live among local African communities. Although they have abandoned their hunter-gatherer lifestyle, they still strongly associate with the rock art of their ancestors. Some of these descendants as well as members of the South African San Council participated in a workshop on the content of this Interpretive Centre and are also responsible for a display that focuses on 'the San of today'.

All this builds up to the audiovisual presentation in the rock shelter theatre, where we experienced a dramatic presentation of the role of the eland in hunter-gatherer culture. The presentation uses three mock rock screens simultaneously to create visions of movement and power. Thunder belts out and lightening flashes. We even felt the cool touch of light misty rain – accounting for the musty smell from the seats! An altogether impressive production.

Evening drinks, a good supper and (for some) late night whiskys by the camp fire followed. The next morning we gathered on the path to Rainbow Gorge high above the camp where it unfortunately cuts through a homestead site. There are several sites here, easily visible at the time of our visit because of the short, recently burnt grass. They consist of stone-faced, earth-walled cattle pens around which occur grindstones and ceramics. In the deposits are maize cobs, considerably smaller than modern cobs, and grindstones are of the type usually associated with maize processing. We found a small sherd of Willow Pattern ceramic. Since Willow Pattern ceramics were first produced in the 1790s, this would, if associated with the site, possibly place it in the early to mid-1800s, or later.

Of special interest were the entrances to the cattle pens, all on the uphill side of the pens. Nowadays, downhill entrances to cattle pens are far more common in KwaZulu-Natal, a feature that was originally common in the lowland savanna areas of the province. Uphill cattle pen entrances and maize cultivation are also features of earth and stone walled sites in the Bergville area. Excavations there have shown that those sites were associated with the Nguni-speaking Zizi of the 1700s. Either Zizi folk or amaNgwane, who moved through this area in the early

1800s, could have built the Didima sites. If developed for tourism, they sites would add a resource of considerable interest to the already rich Didima experience.

The Christmas party, 14 November 2004

Several years ago we spent a day at Natal Bay, visiting the Durban Maritime Museum and then enjoying a evening harbour cruise with supper on board. It was an experience well worth repeating. Once again we asked Prof. Trevor Jones to be our guide. Trevor is Head of the School of Maritime Studies on the Durban campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. He has had a long-term interest in maritime transport economics, which naturally manifests itself in a keen interest in the Durban port, the vessels that visit it and the relationship between the port and the city. He visits the port frequently, often on a daily basis.

The event took some organizing, both beforehand and on the day, but eventually we were all on board. Unlike the previous event, we were restricted to an hour long cruise – this time without a meal. It was a beautiful day, with its heat alleviated by the shade on board and the breeze. Under Trevor's instructions, the pilot steered the boat around Durban Bay while Trevor gave us potted histories, specifications and statistics of individual vessels and the bay itself. Among the vessels berthed was a massive grey US warship, on its way home from Iraq. We chugged out towards the harbour entrance past the restaurants to the site of the planned undersea tunnel that will link Vetchies with the Bluff.

With the hour nearly up, we returned to the Sarie Marais berth and lunch at a nearby restaurant. It was a well-supported and enjoyable event, but sadly marred by the extremely poor sound system on board. One wonders at the values of a tourist enterprise that so blatantly disregards the needs of its customers.

Seeds: food for thought, 2 March 2005 by Chrissie Sievers

This talk by ex-committee secretary Chrissie Sievers summarised some aspects of her work at Sibudu Cave on the Tongati River inland of Maidstone, which provided the subject of her recently submitted Masters dissertation. Chrissie's work includes aspects of archaeobotany (the recovery and interpretation of plant remains from archaeological deposits) and palaeoethnobotany (focusing on human use of plants).

Plants residues in archaeological sites fall into two broad categories: macroremains such as fruits, nuts and seeds, and microremains such as pollen and phytoliths (silica bodies that form within and between living plant cells). The preservation of these remains is aided by extreme moisture states, such as aridity, waterlogging or freezing. Charring in appropriate temperatures under anaerobic conditions (so the plant remains do not turn to ash) also promotes preservation. We can also identify plant remains in other ways. Bullrush millet (*Pennisetum typhoides*), for example, was first identified on Iron Age sites in South Africa from seed impressions in 1700-year old ceramic pots. Very often one strand of archaeobotanical evidence is not conclusive on its own but can be combined with other of data—archaeobotanical, faunal and artefactual—to build up a picture of the past.

Chrissie gave several examples where archaeobotany has provided information about people in the past. The stomach and intestines of the rather overweight wife of the Marquis of Dai, who lived in China during the Han period (206 BC–AD 220), contained 139 watermelon seeds. She was evidently fond of food and her greed may have been the death of her. She seems to have died of a heart attack brought on by the acute pain from her gallstones an hour or so after eating a generous amount of watermelon.

Lindow Man, found in a peat bog in Cheshire, England, dates to the Late Iron Age or Roman period, perhaps the first century AD. He suffered a somewhat overdone death: a narrow

bladed weapon was driven into the back of his skull twice, he was struck on the back, garrotted with a knotted thong of sinew and his jugular slit. But the really interesting bit was the charred bran and husks (chaff) in his stomach. Electron spin resonance tests showed that Lindow Man had most likely eaten food that an unleavened bread or a griddlecake of coarse wholemeal flour, baked at 200°C on a flat surface for about 30 minutes.

Grauballe Man, a bogman from Denmark had a last meal of gruel, perhaps with some meat. His stomach contained 63 varieties of seeds, including spelt, rye, clover, buttercup and black nightshade. This last meal consisted of chaff, larger plant fragments and weed seeds. The weed seeds were part of waste, often used as famine food, or given to condemned criminals. What we can be sure of was that apart from anything else Grauballe man probably suffered from an almost continual stomach ache because of worms: he had millions of whipworm eggs in his stomach.

Plant remains on Ötzi the Iceman, who emerged from a glacier in Italy in 1991. He lived and died some 5300 years ago. Ötzi's intestines contained hop hornbeam pollen. Because the hornbeam flowers between March and June, he must have died during the spring or in early summer. It is also likely that Ötzi belonged to a farming community because grains on his garments and recovered from his colon were identified as bran of the primitive wheat Einkorn.

In the Iron Age levels at Sibudu, dating from the early 1000s and associated with the earliest Nguni speakers in South Africa, Chrissie identified at least 100 different plant taxa. She identified 70 % of these remains to species. To do this Chrissie painstakingly built a collection of 300 modern seeds, fruits and nuts for comparitive purposes. The identified indigenous taxa consist predominantly of trees and shrubs and to a lesser extent, climbers. Grasses, herbs, forest undergrowth species and suffrutices are rare.

The most common plant represented in Sibudu is *Harpephyllum caffrum*, the wild plum or *ngwenya*, which occurs in the coastal belt from southern Mozambique to the Eastern Cape. The wild plum fruit is rather delicious.

Marula remains, by contrast, are relatively rare at Sibudu and do not occur in the Middle Stone Age levels. One authority suggests that the natural distribution of marula (*Sclerocarya birrea*) does not extend south of the Thukela valley, though Chrissie pointed out that marula remains occur in the Mngeni valley in some of the earliest Iron Age deposits, dating from the 600s. This seems too early for marula's presence there to be explained by its deliberate cultivation by African agriculturists. Perhaps Middle Stone Age people did not bring fruits home, as they did meat.

Carissa bispinosa, also present in Sibudu

The second most common plant represented in Sibudu is the castor-oil bush (*Ricinus communis*), which the 1830s missionary Gardiner regarded as indigenous. It also occurs in cave deposits at Shongweni, Border Cave and Umhlatuzana, and at Sibudu is most common in the earliest Iron Age levels. The castor-oil bush is apparently indigenous to East and Northeast Africa. Its occurance in Sibudu contrasts with that of another common exotic species, the invasive syringa (*Melia azerdarach*), which is least common in the lowest Iron Age levels. If it is truly associated with the 1000-year old levels at Sibudu, then it is an ancient introduction to southern Africa. It may have arrived inadvertently as a weed, or may have been deliberately brought for medicinal and cosmetic use. It is tempting to wonder if it was introduced to our region by incoming Nguni speakers. Is it possible that castor-oil plants were introduced to the Great Lakes region of East Africa where the ancestors of Nguni speakers probably lived prior to

1000? It would be useful to examine plant remains dating from 400 to 1000 to see whether castor-oil bush occurs then.

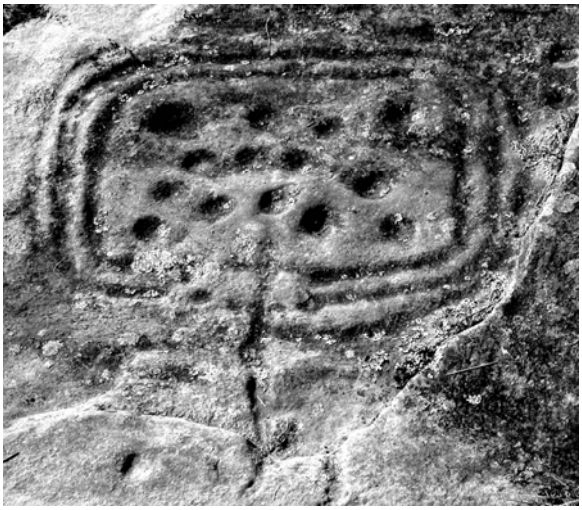
Chrissie discussed some of the problems archaeologists face with this kind of work, for example, understanding how plants are introduced into archaeological deposits (human, animal or windborne) and evaluating the significance of abundancy. There seemed to be no easy answers. Her research did show, however, that with the exception of a single species, all the plant remains in the deposits came from plants that currently grow in the Sibudu area. Further, that despite good evidence from elsewhere for climatic change over the last 1000 years, these changes were not reflected in the Sibudu plant remains. This is probably at least partly because of the buffering effects of the Tongati river, provides water even in drought times.

OTHER NEWS

Notes from Northumberland: carving my way through a northern English county by Aron Mazel, School of Historical Studies, University of Newcastle upon Tyne

In the last Gnews (vol. 50, March 2003) I described how awestruck I was by my first encounter with the carved rock floor at Ketley Crag Rock Shelter. I have revisited this site several times since then and, without fail, have had the same response. I thought the feeling would wear off, but not yet. However, lest you think that the rock art of Northumberland consists of only one carved rock shelter floor and all I do is make pilgrimages to it, let me tell you more about my project and what I am up to.

I start the story in the beginning (well, sort of). In the mid-1960s Stan Beckensall visited Old Bewick in northern Northumberland, and saw cup and ring rock carvings for the first time. Captivated by these images, the visit sparked a lifelong interest that took him to the far corners of Northumberland in search of more carvings, and led to the accumulation of a substantial personal archive. The core of the archive consists of 500 drawings, 1800 colour slides, 1230 monochrome negatives and prints, and 1300 colour negatives and prints. In addition, Beckensall has described most of the known rock art panels in the county along with information about their discovery and publication and adjacent archaeological sites. Much of this information has been included in his publications about Northumberland and British rock art, including several books, the latest being *British Prehistoric Rock Art* (1999) and *Prehistoric Rock Art in Northumberland* (2001).Next to his extensive text on the carvings, the chief strength of the archive is the accurate drawings of rock carvings that he has painstakingly and meticulously made during the last four decades. More so than photographs, the drawings enable viewers to develop an overall and detailed sense of the motifs that the carvers inscribed into rocks, and the relationship of the motifs to each other.



Dod Law

Recognising the significance of Beckensall's Northumberland rock art archive, and the fact that he is getting on in age, being a septuagenarian (albeit a remarkably fit one!), the University of Newcastle requested that he donate his archive to its Museum of Antiquities to ensure its appropriate care and housing. In return, the university undertook to make the archive

widely available on the internet. Funding was obtained through an Arts and Humanities Research Board Resource Enhancement Grant, and I was appointed the Project Officer.

The primary product of the project is a website for use by a variety of interest groups, ranging from researchers to schoolchildren. The website is underpinned with a detailed database containing information and visual material relating to the carvings, their landscape settings and relationship to other archaeological sites, and management and conservation data. The website also features bubbleworld images providing 360° views of the landscape surrounding a representative sample of the carved panels.

My project tasks were manifold. Together with Beckensall, I catalogued his photographic collection and filed the photographs in acid-free A4 envelopes according to panel. I took thousands of photographs, both digital and conventional, and these have been catalogued and filed. I digitized photographs and drawings, mostly during the winter months, when limited light and cold (I cannot tell a lie!) discourages extensive fieldwork. During my first year, I completed 50 days in the field during which time I visited 510 panels (mostly with Beckensall) to fix their locations using a GPS and to photograph them.

Old Bewick, the carved rock that first captured Beckensall's imagination.

I revisited and completed detailed reports on 380 of these panels, which includes recording information relating to panel identification, environmental setting and surface of panel, site type and archaeological context, management and conservation, and the carvings. This information will be essential to the interactive database that will underpin the website.

Away from the cataloguing of visual images, the fieldwork, and digitising I have had to, among other things, conceptualise the website and in particular identify the potential audiences along with their needs and learning styles and develop the metadata list that will form the basis of the database. I have also developed a draft list of background thematic pages that will address the most common questions people ask about rock art and a tribute to Beckensall himself. There will be an interactive section for children.

While I have found all the activities associated with the project challenging and stimulating, my greatest enjoyment (not surprisingly) has come from working with the panel data and the fieldwork programme. After studying Beckensall's publications, perusal of the English Heritage Rock Art Pilot Project (RAPP, 2000) report and discussions with Northumberland County Council archaeologists, discrepancies became apparent over the number of rock art panels in the county. For example, the RAPP report stated that the Northumberland Sites and Monuments Records list 450 panels, while Iain Hewitt, who had worked with Beckensall in the 1980s and 1990s, has records of 363 panels. Beckensall had never quantified his recordings. It thus became essential to establish an accurate database of known records to appreciate the nature and scale of the resource that formed the basis of the project.

With the help of Beckensall and Hewitt, a database of existing records was completed in February 2003, and this indicated the existence of 753 known panels; substantially more than

were previously thought to exist. The discovery of more panels during fieldwork, along with the re-assessment of Beckensall's recordings in the field, and the provision of additional information by colleagues, has taken the total to 892 panels. Most of these carved rocks are located in the countryside, but many have been removed to museums or private homes and some have been lost.

The project was completed in December 2004. The number of rock art panels was increased to 1060, and 720 (of the 810) panels known to exist in the field and 82 in museums were recorded. We located 90% of the panels still in the countryside, and 560 of these panels were revisited to collect additional data. Over 8500 photographs were taken, and some 3800 images (drawings and photographs) scanned. The website, called *Northumberland Rock Art: Web Access to the Beckensall Archive* (http://rockart.ncl.ac.uk) was launched in January 2005. Believed to be the world's most comprehensive regional rock art website, it has already received over 3 million hits. Features include: entry for every carved panel, with data on location, archaeology, environment and management. Six thousand images include 360° bubbleworld photos of 46 panels in their settings; browse facilities to access all panels according to parish, map, type, location, access (with suitability for wheelchairs), image type and art motifs; simple and advanced interactive search facilities, allowing users to search on a combination of criteria. A word search of the entire website; interactive mapping, allowing users to see the location of panels, and view search and browse results on maps at different scales; download data from the website; and an Interactive zone with e.g. learning journeys about rock art, a tribute to Beckensall, video and audio clips, recommended visits, games, photo galleries and bibliography.

Weetwood Moor

SNIPPETS

A visit by the Abbé by Adrian Flett

In December 1945, Graham and Dulcie Clarke were honeymooning at what was known as the Top House on Game Pass Farm at Kamberg. At that time the farm belonged to Colonel Greene, son of Dean Greene who had been actively involved in the Bishop Colenso affair.

One day a car arrived at the Top House and the driver introduced himself as Clarence (Peter) Van Riet Lowe and said he had heard of the Bushman paintings on the farm and wondered if he might see them. Graham took him to Game Pass Shelter and to another site further up the valley of the Mooi River; probably Kranzses Shelter.

The farm adjacent to Game Pass Farm, where the main buildings of Kamberg Reserve now stand, was at that time owned by the Potterill family. When Mr. Potterill died, his widow, affectionately known as Auntie Potts, had stayed on at the farm and was running a guesthouse. Van Riet Lowe was staying over at Auntie Potts' guesthouse during his visit. He told Graham and Dulcie of the Abbé Breuil's forthcoming visit to South Africa and asked if he might bring the Abbé to see the paintings. In 1946 Van Riet Lowe called at Graham and Dulcie's home in

Hilton to introduce them to the Abbé Breuil and his secretary who travelled with him. And so the three went off to stay at Auntie Potts' guesthouse and to see the rock art.

In the guesthouse, Graham recalls, Auntie Potts had "rock art" which had been painted by an artist friend. It appears Van Riet Lowe showed the Abbé the pseudo art representing it as the real thing and the Abbé enthused over it. Once the story came out the Abbé was not amused. He was however, by all reports, impressed by the real thing at Game Pass Shelter.

You wonder if Auntie Potts had caught Van Riet Lowe with her pseudo art, on his previous visit, and he was merely passing on the joke.

A significant discovery by Joané Swart

On one of our field excursions into the Ukhahlamba Drakensberg we made a discovery, not quite in an Indiana Jones manner, but nevertheless a discovery of importance. You might say it was 'by accident', as we found the artefacts in the area we placed our lunch bags before examining the rock paintings in the shelter. Just before leaving the shelter, Boyd, our group's local soil scientist interested in rock art pigments, with an eye focussed on 'rocks that look different', brought an interesting river cobble to our attention. Upon closer inspection, we recognised that this was a basalt grindstone soaked in ochre, with four unidentified painted motifs. After pinching ourselves to make sure that what we were seeing was real, we were able to pull our eyes away from the grindstone, only to discover that this was merely the beginning. In close proximity to the grindstone, we found two more pigment-stained basalt stones. But this was not the end. The fourth stone, the *pièce de résistance*, was a roughly circular piece of mudstone with something even more unexpected – paintings of four bichrome rhebuck. Our excitement was not to end there, however, as, on further investigation, it was revealed that more stones were safely tucked away under the cluster of boulders (the first four being found on the surface).

What makes this find special and unique? Portable stones with paintings are not only a rarity, but are mostly confined to Western Cape and are often found in close association with burials. The stones discovered by Boyd, Penny and myself are the first stones of this kind to be found in KwaZulu-Natal and Lesotho – hence our excitement. We believe the stones were intentionally placed where the arrangent of boulders forms a pit-like feature. All the stones show evidence of pigment or paintings. San paint and paintings contain an element of power that is implicated in gaining access to the spirit world. The rhebuck depictions on one of the stones are also interesting, because according to ethnographic evidence, rhebuck had spiritual significance.

Cattle herding in Africa: new genetic evidence, adapted from *National Geographic Online*

Cattle were brought to southern Africa possibly as early as 2000 years ago by stone tool-using pastoralists and by Iron Age agriculturists. But the pattern of their domestication in Africa is hidden beneath millennia of movement and trade. Recent genetic studies, however, have allowed scientists to get a clearer understanding of the process. By studying the DNA of cattle in 23 countries, an international team of scientists is filling in the picture. Evidence suggests that sheep and goats, first domesticated in the Near East, were imported into Africa through trade and interaction. Cattle were similarly believed to have been domesticated in the Near East. But new evidence suggests that Africans independently domesticated cattle.

In general, the domestication of cattle and other livestock has followed the establishment of agriculture. But archaeological research has shown that the domestication of cattle in Africa

unfolded differently from elsewhere in the world. In many parts of Africa, people herded cattle long before crop cultivation was adopted. Some African groups that have herded cattle for centuries and never adopted cultivation at all, or have done so only recently. One example is the Masai of eastern Africa, who rarely slaughter cattle but instead mix the milk and blood of the animals to create a staple of their diet.

Analyses of genetic material of cattle in East, West and southern Africa reveal a more complex history than originally thought. The greatest amount of genetic diversity was found among herds in Central Africa. This led researchers to suggest that people living in Central Africa developed cattle domestication on their own, and that the techniques, or the herders themselves, gradually migrated toward the west and the south, spreading domestication across the continent.

Many modern African herds contain mixtures of two breeds: Africa's native cattle, called taurines (*Bos taurus*), and a slightly larger Asian breed, known as zebu (*Bos indicus*), which was domesticated before it arrived in Africa. Some variation in the African herds is also a result of European influences. Over the centuries, people have improved their livestock by selective breeding. Resistance to nagana is one trait that potentially could spread through selective breeding and taurine cattle in one region of West Africa, unlike most livestock, are resistant to the parasite that causes the deadly disease. Sadly, the number of animals with the protective adaptation is dwindling, as local farmers give up their taurine herds for large zebu animals. Researchers have emphasised that "The starting material for selective breeding is diversity. We can't afford to lose it."

For future generations

For archaeologists of the future: thousands of randomly buried tablets, each with a message in one of seven languages. Nearby, there's a huge roofless granite structure with words inscribed on it, surrounded by two circles of 20-tonne megaliths. You can be sure that whoever excavates this site isn't going to stop at the first tablet, nor even the first stone circle. But if they don't stop eventually, they risk an agonising death. The stones and tablets are the US Department of Energy's way of warning people that below this site in Yucca Mountain, Nevada, lie 70 000 tonnes of plutonium and radioactive waste that will be dangerous for 100 000 years.

But, what of the dire warnings on Egypt's tombs and pyramids. The Egyptians believed that death lay in store for anyone who disturbed the corpses. Modern archaeologists treat the remains with respect—but they do investigate them, ignoring the priestly death threats. Will our descendants heed the Yucca Mountain warnings?