PAST

Peebles Archaeological Society Times
September 2012

Northumberland rocks!

Summer Field Trip 2012

Jeff Carter reports on our summer excursion to visit rock art sites in the Wooler area of Northumberland.

On Sunday 3 June, a group of eleven PAS members travelled down to Northumberland for a day's exploration of rock art. After a brief visit to the Maelmin Heritage Trail near the village of Milfield we called at the local café to rendezvous with rock art expert Dr Tertia Barnett, along with two of her students who were to join us for the day.

Dr Barnett is an Honorary Fellow in archaeology at Edinburgh University, and is well known to the PAS members involved in our Kilrubie survey as she managed the RCAHMS Scotland's Rural Past project of which it formed a part. However prior to that, in 2004-2006, Tertia was responsible for the Northumberland & Durham Rock Art project that established protocols for the investigation and recording of rock art now being used in other parts of Britain where the art is found.

First, some background about our prehistoric rock art in Britain! The vast majority of prehistoric rock art is abstract, (rather than pictorial) and bears no resemblance to anything recognisable.

The main traditions are thought to date to the Neolithic and Early Bronze Age (c 4,000 to 1,500BC), and are represented by cup and ring carvings, and passage grave or megalithic carvings. Intriguingly, some cup and ring carvings have been carefully removed and reused in later burials, but the reasons for the initial carving and the re-use are not known – yet, or perhaps ever.

Many theories have been put forward, but the location of carvings at significant places in the landscape provides a possible clue. Also, recently excavated areas around rock art in Kilmartin glen provide evidence for cobbled viewing points and also the incorporation of quartz fragments (possibly from the hammer stones used to create the carvings) set into clay in cracks in the rock. This suggests the creation of the art, or perhaps the re-carving over time, was accompanied by ceremony [see Andrew Meirion Jones et al *An Animate Landscape: Rock Art and the Prehistory of Kilmartin, Argyll, Scotland*. Windgather Press 2011]. However much remains to be investigated and considered.

Over the course of the day, Tertia's aim was to lead us to three different sites to illustrate the range of rock art discovered in Northumberland – so, fortified by tea/coffee and butties from the Maelmin café, we set off!

The sites range around the Milfield plain, an area of fertile flat land whose existence accounts for the long history of human occupation recorded in the Heritage Trail. Maelmin was the Anglo Saxon settlement in the area, but occupation stretched back to at least Neolithic times. A number of timber henges have been identified (we saw a reconstruction at Milfield), as well as a variety of burial mounds.

In compiling this article, Tertia's excellent field notes have been invaluable and are gratefully acknowledged!

The first site, **Roughting Lynn**, named after a nearby small waterfall, is an elongated domed sandstone outcrop 20m long and 12m wide, forming the largest decorated rock in Northern England.

The carvings were discovered in 1852 by Durham clergyman and local antiquarian, William Greenwell. Antiquarian George Tate drew them around 1865, and Professor Elizabeth Shee Twohig made a more thorough survey in 1988.

The western part of the domed outcrop was quarried away before 1850, and a large slab removed across its width. There is still one cup and multiple circle motifs on a surviving part to the west and although the south is gouged with mainly natural grooves, there are cups and rings there too. The quarrying of the rock is undated, though likely to be Post Medieval, with possible loss of rock art motifs. Early illustrations of the site show cut-out portions with 'steps' of straight and sheer edges where rock has been removed, and tool marks can be seen across all areas of the dome.

Tertia pointing out some of the fine cup-and-ring marks at Roughting Lynn – the largest decorated rock surface in Northern England. The carvings were discovered in 1852 by the famous antiquarian, Canon William Greenwell..

Roughting Lynn. In the area between the outcrop and the ravine of the Broomridgedean Burn are the multiple ramparts and ditches of an undated but presumably later prehistoric enclosure – here the line of one of the banks is picked out by the bluebells.

The rock, the enclosure (see photo above) and the burn all look west to the valley that leads to the Milfield Plain, and to the south-east the land rises to Doddington North Moor where there are more carved rocks. Further along the ridge to the north there are more carved rocks at Goatscrag and Broomridge, which may have been visible from Roughting Lynn before the tree planting round the site.

The position of the rock at Roughting Lynn is thus pivotal in the area, lying as it does at the head of the Broomridgedean valley, whose burn flows past the towering north scarp with its rock overhangs. In addition to string of rock art sites along the ridge there are Bronze Age burials at Goatscrag, while a now-removed round barrow cemetery lay at its west end.

After this excellent introduction to the area and its riches, it was back to the cars and on to our second site - **Dodd Law**, a hill on Doddington Moor where a number of important carvings have been identified.

Our walk up the hill took us through the fairways of Wooler Golf Club's sporting-looking course which occupies its slopes. Once on the hilltop, Tertia guided us around several of the panels of rock art which survive in this archaeologically rich upland landscape. A number of carvings have also been identified in the vicinity of a large sandstone quarry to the north of the hill.

Our main goal before lunch was 'Dodd Law Main Rock'. In 1865, the discovery of this impressive rock panel was described by George Tate, the Victorian doyen of local rock art studies as follows: *It was almost entirely covered over with turf till 1855, when it was observed by Mrs Procter, who caused part of it to be cleared; another portion was cleared in the course of this present year, and now an area 16 feet by 8 feet is exposed, covered with figures. The overlying peat which has preserved these singular sculptures was from a few inches to one foot in depth…Three other groups of figures, curved and irregular forms, are on the scalp of the same rock, but at some distance from each other. Twenty-four figures are traceable on these stones.*

Tate (1865) and Bruce (1869) drew the rock, and it is clear that part of it has been removed since then, with a portion of the western motifs now missing. An almost rectangular and horizontal panel remains, divided by a crack across the middle which is now filled with turf.

The particular interest of the site is that there are three levels to the rock surface, and the main motifs occupy the lowest level, well-preserved by peat and turf, and deeply pecked into the rock. However some cups and partial rings on the uppermost level of the rock surface have eroded considerably, or were pecked on lightly. A possible explanation for this is that some rock with older motifs was removed, possibly deliberately for incorporation in a monument, and new motifs put on at a lower level in prehistoric times.

All across Dodd Law, remains of human settlement abound, ranging from the faint traces of rig and furrow cultivation to prehistoric cairns and enclosures. The ramparts and ditches of an Iron Age hillfort crown the hill - and provided some shelter for a bracing picnic lunch.

After lunch and a half-hearted rain shower, we went on to examine further rock art panels on the margin of the hillfort where it meets the edges of the golf fairways (the cup marked rocks have been known to be used by the golfers for teeing off!). Here we examined rock surfaces uncovered during excavations of the hillfort by Newcastle University in the 1980s. The carvings here include some examples of unusual motifs (eg an 'oculus' composed of two cups with a groove bending in between them).

Examining Dodd Law Main Rock. This elaborate rock art panel gives only a limited view of the Milfield Plain, although the Cheviots and the sandstone scarp edge are in sight and there is good visibility in all directions. The size of the group - around 15 - proved to be ideal as a much larger party would have difficulty appreciating the details of the carvings.

The third and final concentration of rock art sites that we visited was on **Weetwood Moor**, situated on a promontory of the Fell Sandstone escarpment that overlooks the town of Wooler. Here too the carvings range from simple cups to more complex and elaborate panels of cups and multiple rings.

The name Weetwood means the wet wood. Although there is some damp woodland at the site today, this is relatively recently planted spruce, and bears no resemblance to the original open, mixed deciduous and pine woodland that is likely to have characterised the environment around the rock art. Today, this upland landscape comprises open moorland and rough grazing, intersected by small streams.

As at Dod Law, much evidence of past human activity survives ranging from prehistoric burial cairns to field dykes and quarrying of more recent centuries.

There are numerous carvings in the immediate vicinity, on the flat outcropping rock surfaces, ranging from simple cups and cups with single rings, to the impressive and elaborate carvings at Weetwood 3a.

Having explored the sites on Weetwood, it was time to thank Tertia for acting as our excellent guide for the day and for the Peebles contingent to head home for Tweeddale accompanied by much discussion of the meaning and significance of all those enigmatic carvings we had seen. More than one of us left Northumberland thinking there must be more rock art yet to be found - perhaps even much closer to home. Yet another reason to wander the hills, contemplating the landscape!

And of course we were also counting our blessings as regards the weather; even if the placename Weetwood means the wet wood, the gods had looked very favourably on our day!

Weetwood 3a has a very fine series of cup and ring motifs, some quite worn, others remarkably fresh. Visitors are requested to refrain from walking on the rock surfaces.

Where is our Peeblesshire rock art?

As Jeff notes in his report on the field trip, several of us left Northumberland wondering about the possibilities of locating new rock art sites closer to home.

In the course of fieldwork on Peeblesshire's hillforts, the 19th century antiquary David Christison looked out for rock carvings - but without much success. He recorded supposed cup marks on the standing stone that sits by the roadside near Kirkton Manor and on a boulder near Castle Hill but these (along with other so-called cup marks from Manor and Soonhope) are now considered to be natural.

However, examples of 'classic' rock art *are* recorded from Peeblesshire. During the excavations at the Roman fort at Lyne in 1959, a plough-damaged stone bearing cup and ring markings was found beside the fence that crosses the N Annexe. Clearly a fragment of what must have been a larger slab, it bears a single cup with traces of three surrounding rings interrupted by two radial grooves. (RCAHMS Inventory no 100).

Now in the Tweeddale Museum, this is the only example of a cup and ring stone of the kind familiar to us from Argyll or Northumberland. Had the builders of the fort perhaps smashed up rock outcrops bearing rock art in the course of quarrying sandstone for the main fort buildings?

A decorated slab, possibly used as a burial cist cover, was found during the 1929-1930 excavations of the complex Bronze Age cairn at Drumelzier (Inventory no 14); the markings consist of four shallow double-ringed figures and one single ring. On the opposite bank of the Tweed, another decorated stone was discovered by Tam Ward on the cairn at Woodend, Mossfennan, in the course of his Upper Tweed Survey; it consists of an angular rock with eight concentric semi-circles pecked into its flat surface (once again it was presumably once part of a larger rock panel)

The final stone was discovered in a bank of gravel at Lamancha, Newlands, and presented to the National Museum in 1867 (Inventory no 101) and is now in the National Museum (see below). This red sandstone slab bears a series of double and single rings and also spiral decoration, all done by pecking technique.

Just over in Clydesdale, a stone fragment with nice cup and ring marking was discovered recently in a drystone dyke at Dunsyre - so if you are out and about on a country walk keep those eyes peeled! There must be more out there in upper Tweeddale too!

The decorated slab from Lamancha, now in the National Museum. Virtually nothing is known about its find circumstances but it is clear from the truncation of the motifs that the slab was not in its original context. It is possible that it been re-used as part of a cist, though the motifs suggest that the original carvings may date to the Late Neolithic period. Does the original rock face still await discovery somewhere in the district?

Launch of PAS Library

Jock Hooper's bequest

Members may recall that our former Chairman, the late Dr John (Jock) Hooper left his extensive collection of archaeological and historical books to the Society to make use of or dispose of as the committee saw fit. Joyce has therefore been hard at work sorting Jock's books, assessing their condition and the academic and monetary value of the collection.

The Society will reap the benefits of Jock's generosity in two ways. Firstly a significant number of Jock's books have now been sold; so far this has realised over £380 for the Society's funds - welcome income which is to be designated for fieldwork and in particular the current project at Shootinglees.

Secondly, the greater part of his collection - especially those books relevant to British Archaeology in general and Scotland in particular - has been retained with the aim of making the volumes available for the use of paid-up members of the society through a simple lending scheme. Full details are appended to this newsletter.

The main purpose of this note is to draw attention to the availability of these books and to the proposed arrangements for lending. If the scheme works, then Jock's collection will provide a foundation on which we can build in future.

Trevor Cowie

Join members of Peeblesshire Archaeological Society for…

'A Walk in the Park'

The Archaeology & History of Hay Lodge Park, Peebles & its environs

Sunday 23 September

Meet at 3pm in the Swimming Pool Car Park

As part of **Scottish Archaeology Month**, we are running
a guided walk around Hay Lodge Park Peebles
Come along and find out about the area's 10,000 year old story!

Duration approximately 1½ hours - access easy
Field notes will be provided

-Free event-

PAS Library

Instructions for borrowing books

Peggie Ferguson has kindly agreed to keep a record of who has what, so if you would like to borrow any of the books in the list below, the lending arrangements are as follows:

1) Phone Peggie Ferguson (01721 722107) and specify which book/s you wish to borrow

2) Peggie will put them at the front desk in the Tweeddale Museum ready to be picked up. Museum opening hours are as follows: weekdays from 10.30 to 12.30 in the morning and from 1 to 4 in the afternoon; Saturday 9.30 to 12.30 only.

3) Books may be borrowed for a period of up to 4 weeks (provided no other request has been received, the loan may be renewed for a further 4 weeks by notifying Peggie)

List of volumes available for loan
(as at 20 September 2012)

Aird, William	*St Cuthbert & the Normans*
Armit, Ian	*Celtic Scotland*
Armit, Ian	*Towers in the North – Brochs of Scotland*
Aston, Michael	*Interpreting the Landscape*
Alcock, Leslie	*Arthurs Britain*
Bahn, Paul (ed)	*Written in Bones*
Bahn, Paul (ed)	*The Penguin Archaeological Guide*
Barnett, T Ratcliffe	*Margaret of Scotland – Queen & Saint*
Bede	*Age of Bede (Penguin)*
Bede	*A History of the English Church and People*
Bedoyere de la, Guy	*Golden Age of Roman Britain*
Bedoyere de la, Guy	*Defying Rome*
Bedoyere de la, Guy	*Roman Towns in Britain*
Bingham, Caroline	*The Stewart Kingdom of Scotland 1371-1603*
Bishop, Morris	*The Pelican Book of the Middle Ages*
Brander, Michael	*Tales of the Borders*
Breeze, David	*Hadrian's Wall (Pelican)*
Brown, Chris	*Robert the Bruce – A Life Chronicled*
Burl, Aubrey	*The Stone Circles of the British Isles*
Carpenter, David	*The Struggle for Mastery in Britain 1066-1284*
Clarke, Grahame & Piggott, Stuart	*Prehistoric Societies, (Pelican)*
Crane, Nicholas	*Mercator – the Man Who Mapped the Planet*
Crawford, O.G.S	*Topography of Roman Scotland – North of the Antonine Wall*
Crouch, David	*The Normans – The History of a Dynasty,*
Dark, Ken	*Britain at the end of the Roman empire*
Dent, John & McDonald, Rory	*Early settlers in the Borders*
Dixon, Nicholas	*The Crannogs of Scotland & Underwater Archaeology*
Driscoll, Stephen	*Alba – The Gaelic Kingdom of Scotland AD800-1124*

Duff, David (ed)	*Queen Victoria's Highland Journals*
Edwards, Kevin J. & Ralston, Ian, (eds)	*Scotland after the Ice Age*
Ellis, Peter Beresford	*The Ancient World of the Celts*
Fagan, Brian	*The Long Summer – How Climate Changed the Civilisation,*
Foster, Sally M	*Picts, Gaels and Scots*
Fraser, Antonia	*Mary Queen of Scots*
Fraser, James	*The Roman Conquest of Scotland – Mons Graupius AD84*
Gibson, Alex & Simpson, Derek (eds)	*Prehistoric Ritual and Religion*
Glob, P.V	*The Bog People*
Graham-Campbell, James	*Vikings in Scotland – An Archaeological Survey*
Hill, Peter	*Whithorn & St. Ninian The Excavation of a Monastic Town 1984-91*
Hellweg, Paul	*Flintnapping – The Art of Making Stone Tools*
Hogain, Daithi	*The Celts – A History*
Hugill, Hugh	*Borderland Castles and Peels*
Jilling, Karen	*Scotlands Black Death*
Johanson, Donald	*From Lucy to Language*
Jordan, Paul	*Neanderthal*
Kay, Billy	*Scots – The Mither Tongue*
Kamm, Anthony	*The Last Frontier – The Roman Invasion of Scotland*
Krupp, E.C. (ed)	*In Search of Ancient Astronomers*
Lord, John W	*The Nature and Subsequent Uses of Flint*
Lyne and Manor Youth Group	*The Source of Manor*
Mcleish, Norrie	*Borderline Cases*
MacSween, Ann & Sharp, Mick	*Prehistoric Scotland*
Mackie, J.D	*A History of Scotland*
Marshall, Rosalind	*Scottish Queens 1034-1714*
Menzies, Gordon	Who *Are the Scots?*
Miles, David	*The Tribes of Britain, 2005,*
Millett, Martin	*Roman Britain (English Heritage)*
Mitchison, Rosalind	*A History of Scotland*
Moffat, Alistair	*Arthur & the Lost Kingdoms*
O'Connor, Terry	*Environmental Archaeology: Principles & Methods*
Owen, Olwyn & Dalland, Magnar	*Scar – A Viking Boat Burial on Sanday*
Oram, Richard	*The Kings & Queens of Scotland*
Palmer, Douglas	*The Origins of Man – An Illustrated history of human evolution*
Penman, Michael	*David II 1320-71*
Penman, Michael	*The Scottish Civil War - The Bruces & the Balliols etc*
Piggott, Stuart	*The Druids (Penguin)*
Pitts, Mike	*Hengeworld*
Prebble, John	*Scotland*
Pryor, Francis	*Britain BC – Life in Britain & Ireland Before the Romans*
Pryor, Francis	*Seahenge – New Discoveries in Prehistoric Britain*
Rahtz, Philip	*Rescue Archaeology*
Renfrew, Colin & Bahn, Paul	*Archaeology – Theories, Methods and Practice*
Renfrew, Colin	*Before Civilisation, (Pelican)*

Ritchie, Anna	*Picts*
Robertson, Anne	*The Antonine Wall*
Ross, David	*Scotland – A History of a Nation*
Salway, Peter	*The Oxford History of Roman Britain*
Scott, Water	*The Black Dwarf*
Simpson, W. Douglas	*The Ancient Stones of Scotland*
Smout, T.C	*A History of the Scottish People 1560-1830*
Stringer, Chris	*Homo Britannicus*
Sutherland, Elizabeth	*Five Euphemias*
Swire, Otta	*The Outer Hebrides & their Legends*
Thomas, Charles	*Christian Celts Messages & Images*
Thompson, Francis	*Victorian & Edwardian Highlands from Old Photographs*
Wallace-Murphy, Tim	*Rosslyn – Guardian of the Secrets of the Holy Grail*
Wickham-Jones, Caroline	*Scotland's First Settlers*
Wood, Wendy	*Legends of the Borders*
Young, Alan	*In the Footsteps of Robert the Bruce*
Young, Alan	*Robert the Bruces Rivals The Comyns 1212-1314*
Zaczek, Iain	*Chronicles of the Celts*
Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland	*A complete run from 1937 to 2007 apart from four volumes (1941-2, 1951-2, 1958-9 and 1992)*

Dates for your diaries

Next meeting…

THURSDAY 18 OCTOBER 2012

Bob Mowat (formerly of RCAHMS)

'Maritime Musings'

And looking further ahead…

PAS meeting

FRIDAY 16 NOVEMBER 2012

Nick Card (Orkney Research Centre for Archaeology)

Excavations at Ness of Brodgar, Orkney

A special guest lecture on this amazing site – as seen on TV
& recent winner of the Research Project of the Year Award!!

SATURDAY 17 NOVEMBER 2012

Edinburgh, Lothian & Borders Archaeological Conference

Venue: QMU Musselburgh

For details of programme & booking information click on
http://www.edinburghmuseums.org.uk/Events/Events-Coming-Soon/Edinburgh,-Lothians-and-Borders-Archaeology-Co-(1)