The Rock-Art Landscapes of Rombalds Moor, West Yorkshire

Standing on Holy Ground

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Archaeopress Archaeology

Archaeopress Publishing Ltd
Summertown Pavilion
18-24 Middle Way
Summertown
Oxford OX2 7LG

www.archaeopress.com

ISBN 978-1-78969-458-1
ISBN 978-1-78969-459-8 (e-Pdf)

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Front cover:
Drawings, left to right :
82/RV 31: Rivock, Rombalds Moor
67/RV 23: Rivock, Rombalds Moor
229/PAR 04, one of the Panorama Stones from Rombalds Moor, now in an Ilkley churchyard.
All drawings: © K. Boughey and WYAAS.
Main Image: 41/DSS 01 Doubler 1, Rombalds Moor: Image: Author and P. Deacon

Back cover:
283/BB 04, Rombalds Moor: Image: Author and P. Deacon

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Printed in England by Severn, Gloucester

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Contents

List of Figures ... v

List of Tables ... ix

Preface and Acknowledgements ... xi

Chapter One: Introduction ... 1
- Background to the Study ... 1
- Terminology ... 2
- Using the bibliography: references to the ERA website ... 4
- The future of British rock-art, and British rock-art research ... 5

Chapter Two: Encountering Rock-art ... 6
- Introduction ... 6
- Definitions ... 7
- Sites and Distribution ... 7
- Motifs ... 10
  - Cups ... 13
  - Grooves ... 13
  - Cup-and-rings ... 13
  - Combining motifs ... 13
- Studies of rock-art in Britain ... 16
- The chronology of rock-art ... 18
  - When was rock-art first made, and by whom? ... 18
  - How long did rock-art continue to be made and used? ... 21
  - When did rock-art cease to be made and used? ... 24
- Discussion ... 25

Chapter Three: Landscapes of Rock-art ... 26
- Introduction ... 26
- Environments, inhabitation and movement ... 28
  - Mesolithic ... 28
  - Neolithic ... 29
  - Bronze Age ... 31
- The involvement of belief systems in the formation of landscape ... 31
- Encountering the sacred: rock, natural monuments and sacred geographies ... 34
  - Rock ... 35
  - Natural monuments ... 35
  - Sacred geographies ... 37
  - Moving through the landscape: routes and views ... 38
  - Moving through the landscape: is rock-art a text? ... 39
- Discussion: recreating the lost landscapes of rock-art ... 39

Chapter Four: Rombalds Moor ... 41
- Introduction ... 41
- Geology ... 43
- Environments ... 44
- The archaeology of Rombalds Moor ... 47
  - Mesolithic ... 47
  - Neolithic ... 49
  - Bronze Age ... 51
  - Iron Age ... 54
  - Roman and later archaeology, to the present day ... 54
- The rock-art of Rombalds Moor ... 55
- Discussion: Rombalds Moor as study area ... 58

Chapter Five: Methodology ... **59**
Introduction ... 59
Methodology of previous studies of rock-art landscapes in Britain ... 59
The boundaries of the study area ... 60
Practical issues in the fieldwork: working with the gazetteers ... 61
Practical issues in the fieldwork: recognising rock-art ... 62
Practical issues in the fieldwork: classifying sites ... 63
Practical issues in the fieldwork: classifying motifs ... 64
Practical issues in the fieldwork: naming the stones ... 65
Practical issues in the fieldwork: locating the sites ... 66
Practical issues in the fieldwork: health and safety issues ... 66
Constructing the fieldwork methodology ... 66
The whole Moor ... 66
The individual rock ... 67
Small Locales ... 68
Natural Monuments and Large Locales ... 68
Fieldwork method: recordings at the sites ... 69
Photography at the sites ... 69
The recording sheets ... 70
Other prehistoric archaeology on the Moor ... 70
Note on data from other sources ... 72
Working with the fieldwork data ... 72
The photos ... 72
The spreadsheets ... 72
The maps ... 72
Constructing maps ... 73
Constructing viewsheds ... 73
Using maps to present results ... 73
Moving from fieldwork to interpretation ... 77

Chapter Six: Results I: The Whole Moor ... **78**
Introduction ... 78
Is the distribution of sites and motifs random, and is there a relationship between site-types and motifs? ... 78
Distribution of sites ... 78
Distribution of motifs ... 80
Distribution of motifs: cups ... 80
Distribution of motifs: cup-and-rings ... 82
Site-types and motifs ... 82
Is rock-art in cleared lowland that has somehow survived clearance different from rock-art in ‘typical’ uncleared upland? ... 85
Is there a relationship between rock-art and water? ... 88
Is there a relationship between carved stones and other archaeology? ... 89
Lithic scatters ... 89
Cairns, short stretches of ancient walling, stone circles ... 89
Enclosures ... 93
Stone circles ... 94
Carved stones and other archaeology: implications for chronology ... 94
Is there a relationship between rock-art, routes and views? ... 96
Routes and views ... 96
Views of the settled landscape and fertile areas ... 100
Discussion ... 102

Chapter Seven: Results II: Natural Monuments in their Large Locales ... **104**
Introduction ... 104
Control Study: visibilities of large upstanding rocks ... 107
Doubler 1 ... 109
The Neb Stone ... 112
The Pancake ... 114
The Sentinel ... 117
The Haystack ... 120

H2 121
Discussion 124
Were views possible? 124
Why were these stones seen as monumental? 126
Were all the natural monuments treated similarly? 127
Conclusions 128

Chapter Eight: Results III: Small Locales 129
Introduction 129
Groups with cups-only, and inside Large Locales 129
Groups with cups-only on IMLT with views of the Pancake and Sentinel 131
IMLT West Trio 133
IMLT Central Trio 133
IMLT East Pair 133
Groups with cups-only with views of the Neb Stone 134
The Little Panorama Group 135
The Neb Stone pair 136
Groups with cups-only with views of Doubler 1 136
The Robin Hood Wood pair 137
Rivock Forest pair 137
Rivock Cliff trio 137
Rivock Arc 138
Groups with cups-only on GCS with views of the Pancake, Haystack and H2 140
The Pancake's Small Locales: Pancake Trios West and East 140
Green Crag West group 144
Green Crag East group 144
The Idol Stone group 144
Woofa pair, Woofa Enclosure group and Woofa Alignment 145
Groups with cups only, and outside Large Locales 148
The Ramsgill pair 148
Lanshaw South pair 148
Hawksworth pair 149
Riddlesden High Carr group 149
Rivock Edge pair 150
Groups with at least one cup-and-ring, and inside Large Locales 150
Hangingstones Rock 150
Rivock Multi-rings pair 153
Rivock Intricate pair 154
Groups with at least one cup-and-ring, and outside Large Locales 154
The Green Gates pair 154
The Pepperpot Group 154
Lanshaw North pair 155
Stanbury Hill group 155
Todmor Stones pair 157
Rushy Beck pair 159
Discussion 161

Chapter Nine: Results IV: The individual carved rock 163
Introduction 163
The carver, the carving process, and the rock 164
Making place: were rocks moved? 165
Why choose this rock? 167
The whole rock 167
The surface of the rock: texture and colour 167
The surface of the rock: smoothness and irregularities 167
The surface of the rock: cracks and bedding planes 169
The surface of the rock: old carvings 170
Why choose this motif? 172
The physicality of carving: encountering the rock 173
Discussion 181

Chapter Ten: Discussion 183
Introduction 183
From four spatial scales to holistic interpretations 183
Themes arising from the preliminary chapters 184
Themes arising from the Results chapters 185
Natural monuments, views and motifs 185
Moving stones 187
An animistic interpretation of rock-art 187
The physicality of carving 188
The rock-art of Rombalds Moor: standing on holy ground 188

Appendices 190
Appendix 1. CSI locale abbreviations and full locale names 190
Appendix 2. Removed Stones: carved stones in B&V and CSI databases, but excluded from the study database, with reasons 191
Appendix 3: Conversion of Bannister's dates in radiocarbon years BP to cal BC. 192
Appendix 4: Fieldwork Recording Sheets 193

List of Figures

Many figures include several images: all details and picture credits given in the text.
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Chapter One: Introduction
Figure 1. Erosion of motifs 4
Figure 2. Problems due to public access 4

Chapter Two: Encountering Rock-art
Figure 3. Rombalds Moor environs 6
Figure 4. Map: Distribution of rock-art in Britain 8
Figure 5. Rombalds Moor: carved stones in rough pasture which have survived clearance 9
Figure 6. Torbhlaren 9
Figure 7. British depictive rock-art 10
Figure 8. Carving rock-art 11
Figure 9. Variations on a theme: cups 12
Figure 10. Variations on a theme: grooves 14
Figure 11 (1). Variations on a theme: cup-and-rings 15
Figure 11 (2). Variations on a theme: cup-and-rings 16
Figure 12. Unusual motifs 17
Figure 13. Examples of European cup-and-ring rock-art 17
Figure 14. Multi-ring carving on wood 19
Figure 15. Motifs and rock 20
Figure 16. Panel composition 21
Figure 17. The capstone of Bachwen portal dolmen 22
Figure 18. Achnabreck 1, Argyll 23
Figure 19. Achnabreck 1, Argyll: detail of smashed motif 23
Figure 20. Portable rock-art 24

Chapter Three: Landscapes of Rock-art
Figure 21. The effects of burning on woodland 28
Figure 22. The three-tiered world 32
Figure 23. A red deer antler frontlet from Star Carr 33
Figure 24. Cup-and-rings with animals: Galicia 33
Figure 25. Tsagaglalal (She-who-watches), The Dalles, NW USA 34
Figure 26. Elf-rocks in Iceland 35
Figure 27. Sami sacred sites in Scandinavia 36
Figure 28. Vegetation and views. 38
Figure 29. Nämforsen, Sweden 39

Chapter Four: Rombalds Moor
Figure 30. Maps: Position of Rombalds Moor 41-42
Figure 31. Two views of Rombalds Moor 43
Figure 32. Map: The sites of Bannister's ten pollen sites 45
Figure 33. Mesolithic scatters and 'settlements' 47

Figure 34. Map: Mesolithic sites from HER record....48
Figure 35. Neolithic scatters and 'settlements'....49
Figure 36. Map: Neolithic sites from HER record....50
Figure 37. Bronze Age scatters and cairns....51
Figure 38. Map: Bronze Age scatters from HER record....52
Figure 39. Map: The enclosures on Green Crag Slack....53
Figure 40. Rombalds Moor: small-scale quarrying....55
Figure 41. Rombalds Moor: 252/GG 02, Green Gates....55
Figure 42. Map: Rombalds Moor: all sites....56
Figure 43. 102/SH 07, Stanbury Hill....57

Chapter Five: Methodology

Figure 44. Map: Rombalds Moor study area, as defined for this study....61
Figure 45. Marks that resemble rock-art....62
Figure 46. TThe effects of erosion on 49/RV 06, Rivock Nose....63
Figure 47. Examples of re-classification of sites....64
Figure 48. 67/RV 23, Rivock Forestry Plantation, 2013....69
Figure 49. Green Crag Enclosure: view north from 300/GC 10....71
Figure 50. Cairn with carved rock used as a kerbstone....71
Figure 51. Map of viewshed and real-world views from the Haystack....74
Figure 52. 41/DSS 01 Doubler 1, and map of viewshed....76
Figure 53. Map: Cumulative viewsheds of Doublers 1 and 2....77

Chapter Six: Results I: The Whole Moor

Figure 54. Map: Distribution of sites and motifs, natural monuments and viewsheds....79
Figure 55. 390/CHH 01 and its views....81
Figure 56. Changes in ground level: 48/RV 05 & 49/RV 06, Rivock Nose....83
Figure 57. Map: Distribution of clifftop and detached site-types....84
Figure 58. Maps: Distribution of ground-level and upstanding site-types and motifs....86-87
Figure 59. Map: Carved stones and lithics: the whole Moor....90
Figure 60. Map: Carved stones and lithics: Green Crag Slack detail....91
Figure 61. Map: Cairns, stone circles, BA lithics, and centres of the major cairnfields....92
Figure 62. Map: The three enclosures of Green Crag Slack....94
Figure 63. Woofa Enclosure....95
Figure 64. Map: Possible northern routeways....96
Figure 65. Map: Neolithic sites in the Ouse Basin, and to the west....97
Figure 66. Map: The viewshed of 45/RV 02....98
Figure 67. Map: Part of the viewshed of Bradley Moor Long Cairn....99
Figure 68. Maps: Long-distance viewshed of 45/RV 02....100
Figure 69. Map: Rock-art and the settled landscape: DTM of Rombalds Moor....101
Figure 70. Almscliffe Crag: view east from CB 01....102

Chapter Seven: Results II: Natural Monuments in their Large Locales

Figure 71. Map: Proposed natural monuments, the Sentinel, and their viewsheds....105
Figure 72. Map: Proposed natural monuments, Sentinel, and viewsheds: GCS detail....106
Figure 73. 41/DSS 01 Doubler 1....109
Figure 74. Map: Viewshed of the Doublers....110
Figure 75. Views of the Doublers....111

Figure 76. 237/CSE 02 the Neb Stone 112
Figure 77. Map: Viewshed of the Neb Stone 113
Figure 78. Edge-on view of 237/CSE 02 the Neb Stone....113
Figure 79. 332/PST 01 the Pancake, from IMLT....114
Figure 80. The Pancake Stone, backlit 115
Figure 81. Map: Viewshed of 332/PST 01 the Pancake....115
Figure 82. 332/PST 01 the Pancake, seen from Green Crag Slack....116
Figure 83. Map: Viewshed of the Pancake, compared with real-world visibilities....117
Figure 84. The Sentinel....118
Figure 85. Map: Viewshed of the Sentinel....119
Figure 86. Views of the Sentinel 119
Figure 87. 302/PR 05 the Haystack 120
Figure 88. Map: Viewshed of the Haystack 121
Figure 89. 355/GCS 13 H2 122
Figure 90. Map: Viewshed of H2. 123
Figure 91. Two views of 355/GCS 13 H2....124
Figure 92. Map: Cumulative viewsheds of the Haystack, the Pancake and H2....125
Figure 93. Large upstanding stones *not* identified as natural monuments....126

Chapter Eight: Results III: Small Locales

Figure 94. Map: IMLT Small Locales, two trios and a pair....132
Figure 95. IMLT Trio West: 278/HST 02, and 279 & 280/HST 03 133
Figure 96. View south-east from IMLT Trio West, Sentinel skylined at right 133
Figure 97. IMLT Central Trio....134
Figure 98. Views from IMLT Central Trio 134
Figure 99. IMLT East Pair....135
Figure 100. Map: Ilkley Moor Small Locales....135
Figure 101. Little Panorama Group....136
Figure 102. The Neb Stone pair....136
Figure 103. Map: Rivock Hill & Rough Holden Small Locales....137
Figure 104. Rivock Cliff trio on Rivock Nose 138
Figure 105. Rivock Arc, with map 139
Figure 106. Map: Green Crag Slack: possible Small Locales and Alignment 141
Figure 107. Map: The Pancake's Small Locales on GCS....141
Figure 108. 326/PR 08 142
Figure 109. Pancake Trio West 143
Figure 110. Pancake Trio East: 338/PR14....143
Figure 111. View from 330/PR 11 of the top of the Pancake....143
Figure 112. Green Crag West group 144
Figure 113. 322/IS 01 the Idol Stone 145
Figure 114. The Idol Stone group....145
Figure 115. Woofa Enclosure: view north-east from slope above GCS....146
Figure 116. Woofa Pair....146
Figure 117. 378/WB 16 and 379/WB 17....146
Figure 118. Maps: possible Small Locale, alignment and pair at Woofa 147
Figure 119. Map: Part of NW Edge and the proposed Ramsgill pair, PC 03 & PC 03a....148
Figure 120. The Ramsgill pair....149

Figure 121. Map: Lanshaw North and Lanshaw South groups 149
Figure 122. Map: Hawksworth pair, 187/HS 01 & 188/HS 02....................150
Figure 123. Map: South-western Moor: Riddlesden High Carr group....................151
Figure 124. 284/HR 01 Hangingstones Rock 152
Figure 125. Rivock Multi-ring pair, 66/RV 22 and 67/RV 23....................153
Figure 126. 67/RV 23 (detail)....................153
Figure 127. The Intricate pair at Rivock Nose....................154
Figure 128. Map: The Pepperpot Group....................156
Figure 129. Map: Stanbury Hill group, and the Todmor Stones. 157
Figure 130. Map: Stanbury Hill group. 157
Figure 131. Stanbury Hill group....................158
Figure 132. Map: The Todmor Stones 159
Figure 133. Map: Rushy Beck pair....................160
Figure 134. Rushy Beck pair, 374/RB 01 & 375/RB 02....................160

Chapter Nine: Results IV: The individual carved rock

Figure 135. Major sites, minor sites 163
Figure 136. Details of carving technique: 372/WB 12, Woofa Enclosure....................164
Figure 137. Details of carving technique: 294/GC 07, Green Crag Slack....................165
Figure 138. Moved stones: 258/WHW 01, Ilkley Moor....................166
Figure 139. Propped stones....................166
Figure 140. Choice of stone: unusual colour 167
Figure 141. 306/CC 02, IMLT 168
Figure 142. Why choose this stone? 295/PR 01 Planets Rock....................168
Figure 143. Stones with cracks and bedding planes: 356/WB 02, Woofa Bank....................169
Figure 144. Bedding planes and cups....................170
Figure 145. Grooves and cups....................170
Figure 146. Variations in the size of cups on a single rock....................171
Figure 147. Achnabreck, Argyll....................171
Figure 148. Peripheral cups, perhaps later additions to the panel 172
Figure 149. Hunterheugh 2, Northumberland....................172
Figure 150. Unusual motifs: ladders, seen on 253/BS 02 and 229/PAR 04 173
Figure 151. Unusual motifs: swastikas....................174
Figure 152. Nämforsen, Brådön island, 1907....................175
Figure 153. Making rock-art: Torbhlaren 176
Figure 154. Hazardous sites: 41/DSS 01 Doubler 1 177
Figure 155. Hazardous sites: 332/PST 01 the Pancake (1)....................178
Figure 156. Hazardous sites: 332/PST 01 the Pancake (2)....................178
Figure 157. Difficult sites: 302/PR 05 the Haystack 179
Figure 158. Difficult sites: 237/CSE 02 the Neb Stone....................179
Figure 159. Difficult sites: 355/GCS 13 H2 180
Figure 160. Difficult sites: 214/WC 01 the Sepulchre Stone, NW Edge 180
Figure 161. Difficult sites: Addingham Crag Stone and Doubler 2....................181
Figure 162. Difficult sites: 258/WHW 01, Ilkley Moor 181

Chapter Ten: Discussion

Figure 163. Selected views?....................186

List of Tables

Chapter One: Introduction

Table 1. Abbreviations used....3
Table 2. Words transcribed from languages of northern Scandinavia. 3

Chapter Two: Encountering Rock-art

Table 3. Proposed chronology of rock-art, after Waddington 18
Table 4. Boughey and Vickerman's sites with cups with and without rings, after Boughey and Vickerman....21

Chapter Six: Results I: The Whole Moor

Table 5. Motif types of all sites in the Study Main Database....80
Table 6. Number and percentage of cups-only sites in different areas of the Moor....80
Table 7. Number and percentage of cup-and-ring sites in different areas of the Moor....82
Table 8. Maximum number of rings in cup-and-ring motifs, and carving-surface features 82
Table 9. Numbers of stones in each of the four site-types. 83
Table 10. Clifftop sites and their motifs....85
Table 11. Detached sites 85
Table 12. Distribution of motifs between ground-level and upstanding sites 85
Table 13. Stones now standing in cleared fields: site details. 88
Table 14. Cliff outcrop sites and their views....102

Chapter Seven: Results II: Natural Monuments in their Large Locales

Table 15. Visibilities of large upstanding carved rocks....107
Table 16. Visibilities of proposed natural monuments, plus the Sentinel. 108
Table 17. Comparison of visibilities: natural monuments and large upstanding stones....108
Table 18. Doublers Large Locale: distribution of motifs. 112
Table 19. Neb Stone Large Locale: distribution of motifs 112
Table 20. Natural monuments and their motifs 127
Table 21. Large Locales: number of sites by site-type and motif....127

Chapter Eight: Results III: Small Locales

Table 22. All groups identified from the maps 130
Table 23. The two possible alignments 131
Table 24. The 20 cups-only groups identified from the maps....131
Table 25. Cups-only groups (identified from the maps) inside Large Locales....132
Table 26. Members of the proposed Rivock Arc 139
Table 27. Possible GCS Small Locales with views of the Pancake, Haystack and H2....140
Table 28. The eight Boughey and Vickerman sites on GCS with views of the Pancake 142
Table 29. Woofa: possible pair, group, and alignment....145
Table 30. All cups-only groups (identified from the maps), and outside Large Locales. 148
Table 31. All cup-and-ring groups identified from the maps....152
Table 32. Cup-and-ring groups outside Large Locales. 155
Table 33. Stanbury Hill group: motifs and intervisibilities. 155
Table 34. All Small Locales and Arc. 161
Table 35. Small Locales with one intricate stone. 162

Chapter Nine: Results IV: The individual carved rock

Table 36. Stones which may have been moved in prehistory....166

Appendices

Table A1. CSI locale names....190
Table A2. Sites listed by Boughey & Vickerman but excluded....191
Table A3. Sites listed by CSI but excluded....192
Table A4. Calibration of Bannister's dates in radiocarbon years BP to cal BC....192

Preface and Acknowledgements

This volume is the published version of my PhD (Deacon 2018), with a number of relatively minor changes. I have reduced and simplified the Appendices somewhat. I have also taken this opportunity to clarify some points in the text, particularly around the impact of vegetation on views, and the changing of vegetation over time. I have added or changed some maps, both to improve the visual presentation of the results, and to show the key areas of Rombalds Moor discussed in the text. I have also clarified the discussion of Large Locales, including the discussion of how Geographic Information Systems technology (GIS) is used to present Large Locales visually. GIS is a very useful tool for presenting results visually, and allows the construction of maps incorporating the fieldwork data, but it is not easy to work with, and was a major challenge, a very complex and difficult area. I am particularly grateful for discussions about GIS with Helen Goodchild, and also with Tom Fitton, Neil Gevaux, Robert Johnston and my supervisors Mark Edmonds and Kevin Walsh; any failings are mine alone. Joy Bannister's work on the environments of Rombalds Moor has never been repeated; for the review of her work presented here, the radiocarbon dates, done in the 1980s, required conversion to cal BC. In the dissertation I used CalPal Online, but I have here recalculated all the dates using the OxCal Online Manual (n.d.). In the in-text citations and bibliography, I have removed electronic sources which can no longer be found, replacing them where possible. I have had to remove the original Preface, as it was unfortunately not possible to obtain permission to print Tauhindali's verses 'A rock, a stone', as the copyright holder could not be identified.

For the illustrations, I have done my best to locate all copyright holders and where this has not been possible, I have in some cases replaced images with others that would similarly illustrate my point; for others, no real substitute was available, but full provenance information has been given in the caption. Many of the copyright holders of images used here very kindly provided higher-resolution images along with their permissions to publish, so I have been able to retain the original illustrations but replace them with higher-quality versions. Thus I am grateful to Peter Faris, who allowed me to use an image from his website, and particularly grateful to the following, who both gave permissions for images to be used, and very kindly gave me high-resolution copies: Tiina Äikäs and Anssi Malinen, Tim Bayliss-Smith; Keith Boughey; Chris Collyer; Daniel C. Dey; Neil Gevaux; Richard Jones; Göran Larsson of the Archive of Gustaf Hallström, Umeå University Library; Ismo Luukkonen; Trond Lødøen; Aron Mazel; Gerhard Milstreu of the Tanum Rock Art Museum Underslös; Cezary Namirski; Gavin Parry; Svala Ragnarsdóttir & Bryndís Björgvinsdóttir; Kate Sharpe; David Shepherd; Mike Short; Blaise Vyner; Clive Waddington; Aaron Watson; Xandlinathry of The Megalithic Portal. I also thank Hugo Lamdin-Whymark (now Anderson-Whymark), Frank Jolley and Morten Kutschera for allowing images of them to be used.

I came to Archaeology rather late, from a career in NHS Mental Health Services. In retrospect, this is curiously similar to Archaeology, in that the key skills involve listening to people talking about their lives and experiences, and trying to understand them in their own terms, from their own point of view, and not my own. In Archaeology, it is the remains of material culture that become the discourse, and invite us to understand people in the past in their own terms, and not our own.

In 2009, I came to the University of York as a mature student to do a BA in Archaeology; the environment was both intellectually exciting and personally supportive and welcoming. I am particularly grateful to Penny Spikins, whose book *Prehistoric People of the Pennines* inspired me to apply to York in the first place, and to all my teachers, especially Steve Ashby, Geoff Bailey, Mark Edmonds, Kate Giles, Aleks McClain, Nicky Milner, Terry O'Connor, and Kevin Walsh, who taught me to write an essay and have an opinion, not at all encouraged in medical training. For my Dissertation topic, I chose to investigate the rock-art on the hills above the Washburn Valley, north of Wharfedale, and learned a lot from not doing it very well, partly because the sample size was too small, and I don't think I was asking the right questions. It was all so much fun, in a deeply serious way, that I went on to postgraduate work, initially a Masters by Research, which with my supervisors' support, transmuted into a doctoral research project, and in turn into this published volume.

From the period over which the original research, which this book stems from, took place I have many people to thank, as I could not possibly have done this on my own. My husband Phil, and my children, Eleanor, David and Rosy, have seen many stones in fields over many years, and though they may not have been very impressed, they have been immensely supportive. I particularly thank Eleanor Deacon, spreadsheet queen, for help with making the Recording Sheets and making and managing the Excel spreadsheets. My husband Phil Deacon was my field companion throughout, and managed and maintained the photos; I could not have done this without him.

Keith Boughey is the co-author, along with Ed Vickerman, of the most frequently cited work in this thesis, and the champion of the rock-art of Rombalds Moor for this generation. His teaching and guidance on recognising rock-art were invaluable, and I am also very grateful for his personal interest in this thesis. I am also very grateful to Joy Bannister, whom I have never met, whose sterling but unpublished work on the environments and archaeology of Rombalds Moor deserves to be better known. Like me, she seems to have tramped around the Moor with her husband, working largely on her own, developing a relationship with the Moor as a singular but ever-changing entity.

Louise Brown co-led the Stanbury Hill work, and then moved on to head up the Rombalds Moor Carved Stones Investigation (CSI), and I am very grateful for her interest in this project, and in making available the preliminary results of the CSI work.

I am also very grateful to David Brown, Senior Forest Manager, Tilhill Forestry Ltd, for access to Rivock, and to Richard Stroud, independent rock-art researcher, who told me that you can see Coniston Old Man from Rivock Nose.

At York, thanks are due to Tom Fitton for help in setting up the mapping software on my laptop. I am particularly grateful to Helen Goodchild for her help with understanding and using GIS, ArcMap, Digimaps and the Edina system. Thanks are due also to Penny Spikins, Chair of my Thesis Advisory Panel.

I am particularly grateful to both my Supervisors, Mark Edmonds and Kevin Walsh. Kevin began as my co-supervisor rather later, as I changed this work from a Masters by Research to a PhD, and has been particularly helpful around concepts of landscape and theoretical underpinnings of mapping.

Mark supervised the original thesis from the outset, and came out to the Moor one brisk autumn day early on, as my ideas about natural monuments were just developing. He subsequently left York, and continued to supervise from his home on Orkney via Skype and email, reading and commenting at length on the chapters and their repeated revisions, over the six years that this work has taken. His own work on the Neolithic and Neolithic landscapes has been inspirational, his constant good humour, support and advice have been invaluable, and I am very grateful.

Chapter One

Introduction

Background to the Study

The study of British rock-art is now very much focused on examining rock-art within its landscape context. Bradley, perhaps the first to bring this approach into prominence, was very critical of studies that concentrated only on details of motifs, saying that the study of rock-art should be part of an archaeological approach that illuminates how people in prehistory inhabited their landscapes (Bradley1997: 5, 8).

Chippindale and Nash (2004), discussing studies world-wide, say that the landscape context of rock-art is a key part of any interpretation, and Waddington (2007a), reviewing rock-art studies in Britain, agrees. Jones, a key figure in British rock-art studies, says that the people who made rock-art saw their landscape, including their rock-art, as a unity, and as animate (e.g. Jones 2001, 2012; Jones, Freedman, O'Connor *et al.* 2011). The interpretive studies carried out by Bradley (1997), and by Jones *et al.* (Jones, Freedman, O'Connor *et al.* 2011) have the landscape position of rock-art at their heart. Bradley's study (1997) mostly concerned Argyll and Northumberland, though it does touch on Rombalds Moor (1997, 95), and more recently, Jones and colleagues' work examined rock-art in its landscapes in Argyll (Jones, Freedman, O'Connor *et al.* 2011). Both these studies consider, amongst other things, views from and of rock-art sites.

They did not, however, consider the views from and of *all* the carved stones in their respective study areas; the Australian rock-art scholar Robert Bednarik has criticised as unscientific many landscape-based studies for this reason (e.g. Bednarik 1990, 2000). This study, then, was conceived as an examination of all the extant rock-art within the study area, looking at the views from and of the rock-art sites. This generated a key statement:

> *British curvilinear rock-art, though probably not all of it, was made in relation to its position within the landscape, particularly in connection with views, both from and of rock-art sites.*

A fieldwork-based methodology was developed to interrogate this central statement, based on visiting all the stones in the study area, and recording the views. This study then became almost a journey from the simple original statement into hypotheses and research questions concerning relationships at four different spatial scales of landscape. The question as to whether or not views were even possible required careful exploration. The interpretation of the results led to a number of insights, and also led to a consideration of the physicality of carving and the embodied engagement of the carver with the rock, which have not, to my knowledge, previously been explored for British rock-art.

Many publications in British rock-art studies focus on fully recording both known and newly discovered rock-art sites, but do not offer much interpretation. This work is of course extremely valuable, indeed essential, for rock-art is being lost by processes of erosion, overgrowth of vegetation, field clearance, development and other practices.

Unfortunately, in general, the study of rock-art has always been rather marginalised in British archaeology, although it is both abundant and accessible. Because it cannot be directly dated, and is often quite isolated from other archaeology, it is perhaps seen as lacking in context and inherently unreliable. Yet today, much of it stands in largely undeveloped upland, exactly where it was made in prehistory, in a landscape whose topography is probably not much altered; and something of its environments can be recovered. Many of the spatial relationships which existed in prehistory, between sites and other sites, monuments, settlements, or natural features in the landscape are still there, although rock-art is a more vulnerable resource than it might seem. Rock-art in its landscapes can indeed tell us something of how people lived in prehistory, if we ask the right questions.

This project grew out of a study carried out for my BA Dissertation, examining rock-art on the hills west of the River Washburn, a northern tributary of the River Wharfe; it raised more questions than it answered (Deacon 2012). The study reported here began as a project for an MA by Research, but after a year, this transmuted into a doctoral research project on all the rock-art on Rombalds Moor, over 250 sites, adopting a landscape archaeology approach.

Rombalds Moor is a circumscribed and relatively small area, a rock-art landscape which has been widely studied, in terms of its environment (e.g. Bannister 1985; Berg 2001; Boughey and Vickerman 2003: 6-9;

Yarwood 1981), its prehistoric and later archaeology (e.g. Cowling 1946; Keighley 1981; Vyner 2008), and specifically its rock-art (e.g. Boughey and Vickerman 2003, 2013; Brown, Boughey *et al.* 2013; CSI Rombalds Moor, n.d.; ERA England's Rock Art; Hedges 1986).

As well as a discussion of rock-art studies and Rombalds Moor itself, Boughey and Vickerman's two publications (2003, 2013) include gazetteers of all sites known at that time, and those works made this project possible. Their work covers not just Rombalds Moor but the whole of the old West Riding of Yorkshire, with a discussion of all the sites and motifs, environments, other archaeology, and landscapes of rock-art (Boughey and Vickerman 2003: 1-46).

During the time the fieldwork for this project was being carried out, the Rombalds Moor Carved Stones Investigation group (CSI) completed and reported their survey of the sites and panels using more modern techniques than had been available earlier (CSI Rombalds Moor n.d.); their work is available on the England's Rock Art website (ERA England's Rock Art n.d.). Their brief did not cover any interpretative work (Louise Brown 2014 *pers. comm.*).

There are no recent environmental studies of Rombalds Moor. However, the comprehensive reviews of West Yorkshire's prehistoric environments (Keighley 1981) and its prehistory (Yarwood 1981), cover Rombalds Moor; and Bannister's unpublished PhD dissertation (1985) on the vegetational and archaeological history of the Moor includes the prehistoric period. Rombalds Moor can also be compared to other upland areas where similar work has been carried out, such as the south Pennines (e.g. Spikins 1999), and the North York Moors (e.g. Simmons 1990; Simmons and Innes 1996).

Terminology

Words may come with their own baggage, and it is important to be aware of this, so as to avoid perhaps unconscious assumptions. Such terms include 'marginal land', 'settled landscape' and 'fertile areas', which are used in much of the interpretive work on British rock-art, and further terms such as 'shamanism' and 'vision quest'. These are scrutinised very carefully herein, as they may be reflecting modern understandings rather more than they reflect attitudes held in prehistory.

In western USA, some rock-art sites were gendered: some places, especially high places, were reserved for men to make rock-art, with other sites, especially lower places in valleys, being reserved for women (Whitley 1998). In Britain, though, we do not know if women made rock-art, indeed we do not *know* that men made rock-art either, as there is no specific evidence about the gender of either the carvers or audiences of British rock-art. I have therefore avoided gendered language, and used 'they' and 'themself' as singular pronouns. Hyphens, joining strings of words together, have been used to emphasise that a term is different from the sum of its parts, thus *rock-art* and *cup-and-ring.*

The numbering system for the carved stones is discussed in more detail in Chapter Five, but essentially incorporates the very different systems of both Boughey and Vickerman (2003, 2013) and CSI (ERA England's Rock Art, nd). Many of the carved stones have well-established names, and I have used them alongside the Boughey and Vickerman and CSI numbering systems; they make the text easier to read. I have not devised names for any of the carved stones, though I refer to 355/GCS 13 Haystack 2, also sometimes called the Little Haystack, as H2 to avoid confusion with 302/PR 05 the Haystack. A single uncarved stone became salient to the discussions in Chapters Six and Seven; as an uncarved stone, it would not be appropriate to give it even a provisional number, and I have named it the *Sentinel* for the purposes of this study.

One previously undescribed carved stone was discovered during the fieldwork, and given a provisional number (224a/CSE 05) fitting in with the schemes used by Boughey and Vickerman (2013, 2) and by CSI to name new stones. Chapter Eight deals with small clusters of carved stones and two possible alignments. None of these had been named, so names for all of these had to be devised for this study, and are listed in Chapter Eight. All are named after the area in which they stand, or a central, already-named carved stone.

Acronyms and abbreviations are mostly avoided in the text, though occasionally used for brevity, but they are used regularly in tables and in maps (Table 1). In the maps, clarity is paramount, and compromises have to be made; many of the maps are clearer on screen than in print. No label ever covers a symbol for a carved stone, though the legend block may do so. For the sites, full numbers (Boughey and Vickerman number/CSI number, eg 110/SH 13) are used where space permits, but abbreviations are sometimes used to avoid long labels obscuring other features. The motif symbols are hierarchical (an unavoidable decision with its own difficulties, discussed in Chapter Two), and the following terms are used:

Table 1. Abbreviations used.

Abbreviation	Full term
B&V	Boughey and Vickerman
BA	Bronze Age
CAR	cup-and-ring
CSI	Rombalds Moor Carved Stones Investigation
ERA	England's Rock Art (website)
GIS	Geographic Information System
GCS	Green Crag Slack
GL	ground-level
HER	Historic Environment Record
IMLT	Ilkley Moor Lower Terrace
Meso	Mesolithic
Neo	Neolithic
US	upstanding
WYAAS	West Yorkshire Archaeology Advisory Service

All Stones: all carved rocks in the Study Main Database, (or other database as otherwise specified).

Cups only: all cups-only carved stones in the particular database; a stone may have grooves as well.

All CAR: all cup-and-ring carved stones in the particular database; a stone may have cups and/or grooves as well.

1-ring CAR: all carved stones in the particular database where the maximum number of rings in a cup-and-ring is one; the stone may have cups, and/or grooves as well.

2-ring CAR: all carved stones in the particular database where the maximum number of rings in a cup-and-ring is two; the stone may have 1-ring cup-and-rings, and/or cups, and/or grooves as well.

3+ring CAR: all carved stones in the particular database where the maximum number of rings in a cup-and-ring is three or more; the stone may have 2- and/or 1-ring cup-and-rings, and/or cups, and/or grooves as well.

Examination of the Ordnance Survey maps for this area show that many areas of Rombalds Moor have names, but one part of the Moor, referred to repeatedly in the text, has no name as such. It is part of Ilkley Moor, the terrace level below Green Crag Slack, and I refer to it *as Ilkley Moor Lower Terrace*, often abbreviated to *IMLT*. Similarly, several features on the Moor are unnamed. There are three very large round cairns on the Moor top; two of them are the Great and Little Skirtfuls of Stones, but the third, on the very highest part of the Moor, is so overgrown that it seems to go largely unnoticed: I refer to it as the *Moortop Great Cairn.*

Some anthropological and ethnographic terminology is complicated by the use of words where different scholars have used different spellings. Herein, this is notable when discussing northern Scandinavian archaeology and Sami ethnography. Here, to avoid confusion, a consistent spelling is used, though it is sometimes different from the spelling used within some of the cited works (Table 2). The spellings chosen follow the work of Inga-Maria Mulk, herself a member of the Sami people.

Table 2. Words transcribed from languages of northern Scandinavia.

Spelling Variants	Definition	Spelling used herein
Sami, Saami	hunter-gatherers of northern Scandinavia and north-western Russia	Sami
Sapmi, Saepmi	area of Lappland inhabited by Sami peoples	Sapmi
seita, sieda, sieddje, sieidi	a Sami shrine	sieddje

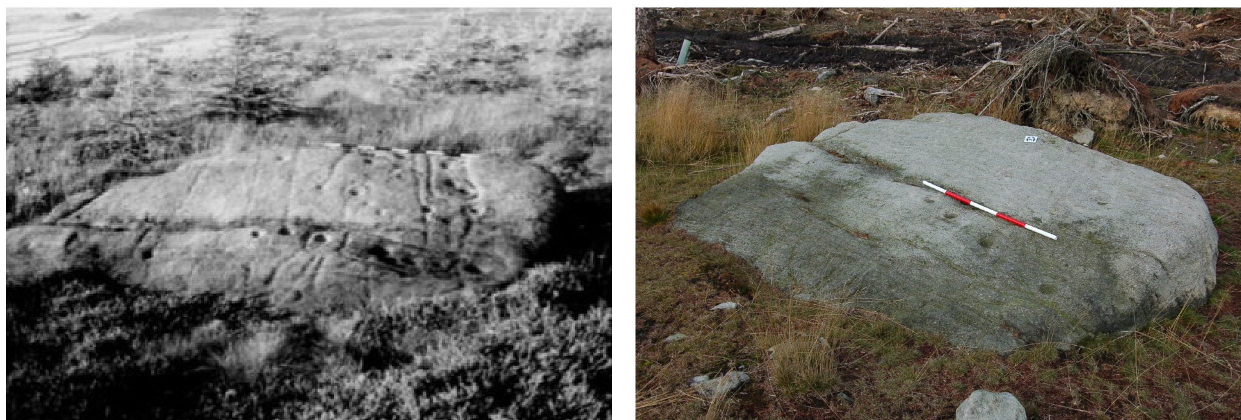

Figure 1. Erosion of motifs: 62/RV 18, Rivock. Left: photo taken before 1986. Right: photo taken 2013, showing obvious loss and blurring of motifs throughout. Images: Left: Photo by E. Vickerman, © K. Boughey and WYAAS. Right: Author and P. Deacon.

Using the bibliography: references to the ERA website

References are made not infrequently to the very large website, ERA England's Rock Art. The ERA website, only a part of the much larger Archaeology Data Service website, contains details of the carved stones in the database here, as well as details of the Northumberland stones, and very useful background material to rock-art studies in general. It has its own internal search function for the stones, each stone occupying several webpages, and the reader should type in the stone's CSI number, with the locale in full if possible (see Appendix 1 for list of CSI abbreviations and full locale

Figure 2. Problems due to public access. Top left: Tourists on top of 302/PR 05 the Haystack. It is quite a scramble to get up: scrapes from boots are a hazard to the rock surface. Top right: Triangular graffito on 384/WB 18, a stone with six cups, one much larger. Bottom left: Detail of the roughened surface of 212/PC 01 Piper's Crag, which may have been 'cleaned' by scouring, or by chemical agents. Bottom right: Recent graffiti on 314/CC 06. Images: Author and P. Deacon.

names, eg HS 01: Hawksworth Shaw 01). To avoid a very considerable proliferation of such references, the reader is referred to the ERA homepage, and can then use the menu on the left-hand sidebar or the website's internal search engine.

The future of British rock-art, and British rock-art research

Whilst carrying out the fieldwork, it became very clear how rapidly erosion is now damaging some of the panels. There are sometimes clear differences between recent photos and those taken less than 50 years ago, such as 62/RV18, shown in Hedges' 1986 book (Hedges 1986: 56; ERA England's Rock Art n.d.; Figure 1).

Conservation issues have been much considered and discussed, though earlier attempts at active conservation have unfortunately often involved techniques that either do not work, or make damage to the panels worse (Barnett and Díaz-Andreu 2005; Darvill and Fernandes 2014; Goldhahn 2008; Jefferson and Jefferson 2010). Space here allows for only a brief discussion of these important issues. Broadly speaking, threats to rock-art come from larger-scale processes including atmospheric pollution, climate change, and vegetation, as well as human behaviour at or around the carved stone itself (Giesen *et al.* 2014; Jefferson and Jefferson 2010; Figure 2).

Scheduling of ancient monuments, including rock-art, gives panels a degree of legal protection from deliberate destruction, development, planning applications and so forth. However, it does not protect sites from casual human interference, whether deliberate, such as graffiti, or accidental or negligent, such as allowing grazing animals in a field with ground level panels (Darvill 2014; Foster 2010; Robinson 2012).

There is also a tension between encouraging public access, and 'hiding' rock-art. Increasing public access may increase interest, in general a good thing, but it also exposes rock-art to the risk of being graffitied, or casually damaged, for example by people walking over panels (Darvill 2014; Sharpe 2014). Sometimes, portables are even stolen; the author is aware of two such cases, one on Rombalds Moor, where a portable has vanished from a cairn on Stanbury Hill.

There are no easy answers to these problems; moreover all stone will eventually erode away, and even reburial of panels will only slow erosion and not end it (Jefferson and Jefferson 2010). Removing panels to a museum is no answer, as it destroys the landscape context, treating a panel as simply art; as Bahn says (2010: 150), 'this kills it'. Some workers suggest that the only realistic approach is to accept the inevitable, and fully record the panels before they are lost (Darvill and Fernandes 2014; Janik 2014). This makes ongoing research projects ever more important.