

NEW MEMBERS OF IFRAO

The following four rock art organisations have recently been approved by ballot as new members of the International Federation of Rock Art Organisations (IFRAO):

The **Hellenic Rock Art Centre** (HERAC) is the first Greek rock art organisation, a recently founded non-profit NGO espousing the ideals and principles of IFRAO. Its Board of Directors has seven members, and the Director of its Scientific Board, Dr George Dimitriadis, is the IFRAO Representative. HERAC has provided a detailed mission statement to IFRAO, which reflects IFRAO's objectives completely. It is dominated by scientific concerns, covering also education, exhibitions, conferences and the publication of the *Hellenic Rock Art Bulletin*. HERAC also plans to establish a rock art eco-museum in Greece. Its office address is Philippi, GR 640 03 Krinides, Greece, and its telephone number is +30251 0517343; e-mail: webmaster@herac.4t.com

The **Trust for African Rock Art** (TARA), established in 1996, is a not-for-profit NGO, registered in Kenya and the U.S.A., and devoted to the preservation of Africa's rock art heritage through the creation of a greater public awareness of the magnificence, age, value, and endangered state of the art; survey and monitoring of sites; provision of an information resource and archive; and promotion and support of conservation measures. The Trust's main activities and outputs include publications of books and articles, surveys of sites throughout Africa, creation of an archive, exhibitions and making documentary videos, holding conferences, and helping to promote governments' interest in rock art conservation. The Chairman of TARA is David Coulson, P.O. Box 24122, 00502, Nairobi, Kenya, telephone number (254) 20 884467/883735; e-mail: tara@swiftkenya.com

The **Association Marocaine d'Art Rupestre** (AMAR, Moroccan Rock Art Association) was founded in 1999 to preserve and protect the rock art heritage of Morocco in its natural context; to contribute to the integration of rock art into the nation's socio-economic fabric; to establish partnerships with public institutions as well as national and international organisations of similar vocation; and to educate pupils at primary and secondary level in matters of rock art significance. AMAR conducts rock art site surveys in the High Atlas and in the Draa valley, and establishes inventories of selected major site complexes. It is also very active in site protection and site tourism. AMAR is governed by a council of six members, led by Dr Abdelkhalek Lemjidi, who has also been nominated as the IFRAO Representative. The address of AMAR is Massira III, C, Tarabrous residence, IMM.685, N°26, 46001-Marrakech, Morocco; e-mail: idijmel@yahoo.fr

The **Asociación de Estudios del Arte Rupestre de Cochabamba** (AEARC, Cochabamba Rock Art Research Association), a new Bolivian organisation, was introduced in *RAR* 20: 182. It was founded in July 2003 and legally constituted in September 2003. Its main purposes and aims include to work with local indigenous communities and rural school children towards obtaining full awareness regarding the urgent need to protect and conserve rock art; to support the organisation and implementation of rock art parks, in which the local indigenous communities, previously trained as guardians, guides, and managers of their heritage, participate with full decision making and economic benefits; to carry out rock art research projects with emphasis on ethnological aspects, and facilitate the training of young researchers among the indigenous communities and students. The principal officers of AEARC are Professor Roy Querejazu Lewis, the IFRAO Representative, and Lic. Erick Terán. The address of AEARC is Casilla 4243, Cochabamba, Bolivia; e-mail: aearc@hotmail.com

The President of IFRAO welcomes the four new members most cordially. There are now forty-two rock art organisations affiliated with IFRAO, covering most parts of the world and practically all rock art researchers. To view the full list of members and their contact details, please visit the main web site of IFRAO at <http://www.cesmap.it/ifrao/ifrao.html> or the Australian IFRAO web site at <http://mc2.vicnet.net.au/home/ifrao/web/index.html>.

THE ROCK ART PRESERVATION FUND

The IFRAO campaign to save the rock art corpus of Dampier, Western Australia (see substantial web site at <http://mc2.vicnet.net.au/home/dampier/web/index.html>), has shown the need for the establishment of a 'fighting fund' for the preservation of rock art worldwide. IFRAO as such is constitutionally not permitted to handle funds, but this does

not prevent it to supervise and audit such a fund operating through another entity. As President of IFRAO I have on 9 June 2004 sought, and subsequently received, the approval of the Council of IFRAO Representatives to set up a trust fund dedicated for the purpose of underwriting costs of specific campaigns to save rock art. It is proposed that this fund be operated by a triumvirate of those three IFRAO Representatives who have made the greatest individual contributions to saving rock art in the past, and that the Council of forty-two IFRAO Representatives supervises its work. I can report that I have now initiated the following developments:

1. The Rock Art Preservation Fund Incorporated (RAPF) was incorporated on 9 August 2004 in the Australian State of Victoria under its Associations Incorporation Act 1981, Certificate Number A 0046092C.
2. The Constitution of the RAPF has been designed to meet Australian legal requirements to operate as a charitable society and a tax-deductible gift recipient, to ensure maximum fiscal effectiveness of the RAPF.
3. The Australian Taxation Office has endorsed the RAPF as a charitable institution on 10 September 2004.
4. I have made application to the Australian Federal Minister for the Arts for listing of the RAPF as a Registered Cultural Association. This is a requirement for purposes of maximal tax exemption (deductible gift recipient status).
5. I have secured seeding grants of \$40 315, earmarked for the current IFRAO campaign to save the petroglyphs and stone arrangements of Dampier (thought to form the world's largest rock art complex), which are under severe threat.

IFRAO is the only international organisation pursuing the protection and preservation of rock art worldwide that is not controlled by a state or by a number of states, and thus effectively capable of opposing states when the need for this arises. Whilst many governments have done excellent work in rock art protection and preservation, most states of the world, not only Portugal, have at some time been complicit in condoning or even facilitating the destruction of rock art. Therefore an independent voice is needed, capable of taking to task recalcitrant governments. Only IFRAO can realistically fulfil that role in heritage protection concerning immovable indigenous or pre-Historic heritage. The Rock Art Protection Fund, which will exist solely to underwrite campaigns to save rock art anywhere, is sorely needed to provide good intentions with financial support. I regard it as a key initiative in our ongoing endeavours to preserve the world's indigenous patrimony.

Robert G. Bednarik
RAR 21-704

IFRAO's Dampier Campaign

In the sixteen-year history of IFRAO, the federation has on three occasions taken to task governments fostering the destruction of rock art: in 1995 the conservative national government of Portugal over the Côa sites, in 2000 the socialist national government of Portugal over the Guadiana sites, and in 2002 the state government of Western Australia over the Dampier rock art precinct. The stakes are by far the highest in the most recent and current campaign, which is why it is becoming the most bitterly fought. On the one side there are the largest petroglyph concentration of the world and the largest number of stone arrangements in Australia. On the other are the largest industrial complex of Australia, an entrenched government and some \$30 billion of corporate interests. In other words, the stakes are much higher than in the two Portuguese campaigns added together, and the confrontation is correspondingly ardent. IFRAO, I believe, cannot afford to lose this battle: it would not only mean the loss of the cultural heritage of those slaughtered by the previous government of 1868 (Bednarik 2002a), it would cause a tragic loss to humanity of a collective heritage and it would probably impair IFRAO's future effectiveness as an advocate for rock art. With this in mind, we are determined to pursue the protection of the Dampier sites to a satisfactory conclusion.

The difficulty in the Dampier campaign stems from the fact that the government has politically painted itself into a corner. It has been badly advised by a lobby group called the Office of Major Projects, which in the past has been the de-facto government of Western Australia. There is absolutely no need for the planned massive petrochemical industry to be located in the Archipelago, there are numerous potential alternative sites in a state that has one of the lowest population densities on the planet. In fact, the development of most of these alternative sites is cheaper than at Dampier, with its infrastructure costs that are twice those of the alternative Maitland Heavy Industrial Estate — which is also about fifty times the size of the available land at Dampier. Moreover, to cram a dozen or so LNG plants onto one small island is a perverse plan. Already there is enough explosive power stored at Dampier to equal fifty-three Hiroshima atomic bombs, so if there were an accident in one plant, the entire region could be engulfed in the largest humanly-caused explosion in history. Some of the proposed plants are even located on land subject to occasional surge floods, being only two metres above sea level, and an inundation would certainly lead to their explosion (Astron 2002).

One would think that the government of Western Australia would see the madness in this plan, but it took IFRAO two years to make the point successfully. Now the government finds itself in an unenviable position: it has committed \$185 million to the Dampier infrastructure, and there is an election looming in early 2005. Only one company of the original dozen proponents has taken up the offer of free land and services, an Indian company with an appalling

environmental record in its home country. How will the government now explain to the public that it has not only wasted public money, it has in the process needlessly destroyed numerous irreplaceable cultural sites.

We have every reason to want to see this incompetent government defeated, because the Opposition Leader, Colin Barnett MLC, has repeatedly stated that, were he Premier of Western Australia, he would immediately relocate the new industries away from Dampier, and he would move to protect the rock art. IFRAO also has the support of numerous national and international organisations, among them the National Trust of Australia, ICOMOS, the World Monuments Fund, as well as the support of the four local Native Title Claimants, the environmentalist movement, most of the local population, all political parties of Western Australia except the one in power, the federal government's environmental offices, and even of some of the companies involved.

Over the past two years, we have secured a number of concessions by the state government, the most important being the commencement of the study of Dampier emissions by the government's scientific agency CSIRO. There are significant deficiencies with this study (Bednarik 2004), but it is a step in the right direction in that it will provide much-needed data on emission levels and pollutant precipitation. It does not address the central issue, the deterioration resulting from atmospheric acidification, but this will be the subject of an IFRAO study that has already commenced, and which is an extension to the deterioration study I began in 1968 (Bednarik 2002b).

In his many letters to me, the Premier of Western Australia has assured me that he is firmly committed to preserving the Dampier rock art. Unfortunately, his rhetoric has not translated into appropriate policies. Having conducted a fact-finding tour of the area in August and September 2004, I regret having to report the following findings:

1. During the previous twelve months, there has been an increase in the physical destruction of rock art sites and stone arrangements, by several parties and in several locations in the Dampier area. The worst single case has been the removal of 159 decorated boulders and the destruction of six bedrock sites to make way for the east-west service corridor connecting King Bay with the proposed industrial area which is not likely to eventuate. I have photographed and filmed all removed boulders, which have been dumped in an area adjacent to a petroglyph site about 100 m from the unused corridor. The government has approved this unnecessary destruction. Many of the boulders are damaged, and by having been taken from their original sites and placed among vegetation they will rapidly deteriorate by both grassfires and the lower ambient pH regimes next to plants.
2. During my presence, two teams of cultural heritage consultants surveyed areas near King Bay, one of them having been instructed not to involve Aboriginal people. They are to list all cultural contents of these areas, which will be removed where practicable to make room for road widening and re-routing connected with upgraded security requirements, an elevated observation area and café for tourists, and for unspecified future developments. The Dampier Port Authority will destroy any assets that cannot be moved, again with the full approval by the government. Both stone arrangements and petroglyphs occur in the area earmarked for the bulldozers.
3. Damage of sites by tourists or local visitors, which has been very limited until recent years, is becoming a significant problem at three cultural sites readily accessible to the public. In particular, there is a significant increase in the incidence of graffiti at the eastern King Bay site, and the major stone arrangement of the King Bay plaque site has been extensively vandalised, apparently in the last years. Even the signs prohibiting damage were vandalised. The Department of Indigenous Affairs has been notified but this is not expected to lead to any action.
4. I have collected evidence that the main polluter, Woodside, still understates the levels of gaseous emissions significantly. There is a growing body of data suggesting that my previously expressed concerns and predictions (Bednarik 2002b) were decidedly justified.

In view of these dire findings the IFRAO campaign to preserve the Dampier rock art needs to be intensified and augmented by additional measures. Besides the commencement of IFRAO's Rock Art Deterioration Study, new initiatives will be added, including the following:

1. IFRAO has formed a coalition with the four Native Title Claimants, the Yaburara, Mardudhunera, Wong-goo-tt-oo and Ngaluma, and will pursue the issues of Indigenous cultural rights and compensation. As a first initiative, the Traditional Custodians will re-introduce traditional maintenance of ceremonial sites under the direction of the senior custodians by restoring a severely vandalised stone arrangement site in mid-2005. This will be the first indigenous initiative since 1868 to effectively assert cultural authority in the Dampier Archipelago. Of the 138 standing stones comprising the monument, only 40 remain fully standing and undamaged, all others are broken, fallen or both. The monument was still intact and undamaged when I found it in 1968. I predict that this project will mark the beginning of effective cultural autonomy of the local Aboriginal communities, and as such will have far-reaching implications.
2. I have commenced the work of assembling a public exhibition of the Dampier rock art and the issues concerning its preservation. It will be officially opened in Karratha, the only large town near the Dampier Archipelago, hopefully in the second half of March 2005. The venue will be the town's library and the adjacent Walkington Theatre, which seats 450 and will be the venue of the opening ceremony. The purpose is to shore up significant local public support for our aims, and after it was launched in Karratha, it is planned to take the exhibition around the country, especially touring regional centres, and then it will be taken to overseas venues. The exhibition will feature the splendour as

well as the plight of the Dampier rock art.

Overall, then, there are positive and negative matters to report, but I would like to think that the positive aspects hold considerable promise. There is a groundswell of local support, sometimes from the most unexpected quarters, that definitely invites optimism. The excellent prospects of securing extensive public approval for our case are most encouraging. Whilst it is true that the direct physical threats to the monument remain as acute as ever, it is also a fact that substantial measures are now either in place or being established that will tilt the balance in favour of the monument. Although destruction of rock art is being continued, despite all promises by the government, the prospects of saving the monument ultimately are much better today than they were even just a year ago.

Please visit <http://mc2.vicnet.net.au/home/dampier/web/index.html> and sign the Dampier Petition.

Robert G. Bednarik

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