

Changing appearances: a comparison between early copies and the present state of rock paintings from the Natal Drakensberg as an indication of rock art deterioration¹

by

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ABSTRACT

The paper compares the earliest known copies of rock paintings from the Natal Drakensberg with the surviving originals to assess the extent of deterioration over the past century. The copies were made by the Hutchinson family in the 1870s and 1880s at Main Caves, Giant's Castle Game Reserve. The results show that there has been extensive damage to, and even loss of, paintings, particularly those executed during the frontier period of the nineteenth century. Further, urgent recording work is called for to save these nineteenth century images of a now extinct way of life.

INTRODUCTION

For more than a century the deterioration of rock paintings, both from weathering and vandalism, has been recognised as posing a threat to the survival of rock art in South Africa (Vinnicombe 1966). In 1892 the President of the South African Philosophical Society urged a programme of copying the remaining rock paintings since nothing was being done to arrest the 'process of natural and wilful destruction of these monuments of an almost extinct race' (quoted in Vinnicombe 1966: 158). More recent work has suggested that paintings in the higher rainfall parts of the Drakensberg escarpment are particularly at risk when compared with paintings in some other areas. For example Vinnicombe (1976: 121) documented a case of severe deterioration after 1907 and particularly between 1958 and 1968 from southern Natal.

Objective monitoring of deterioration is best done with dated photographic records. However, relatively little in the way of photographic recording of South African rock art took place until after the Second World War (eg. Willcox 1956). In the case of the Natal Drakensberg, specific recording with the aim of providing a photographic base-line for monitoring was started only in the late 1970s (Mazel 1981), too recently for an assessment to be made on this basis. Apart from the rare early photographs, such as that used by Vinnicombe in the case mentioned above, present attempts to determine the extent of deterioration can be based on 'facsimile' copies, provided that the limitations of such copies are recognised. In this paper we make use of the earliest surviving copies of paintings in the Natal Drakensberg to assess deterioration at the Main Caves, Giant's Castle Game Reserve.

¹ We dedicate this paper to the memory of Alex Willcox: 14 May 1911 – 1 September 1993.

THE HUTCHINSONS AND THEIR COPIES

The group of sites known as Main Caves is one of the best-known rock art locales in Natal (Fig. 1). It falls within the Giant's Castle Game Reserve which was originally declared in 1903. Today a site museum, developed and controlled by the Natal Parks Board, Main Caves was the focus of attention by Natal colonists visiting the Drakensberg in the late 19th century. Among these visitors was a father and son team, Mark and Graham Hutchinson, who, encouraged by Sir Henry Bulwer, Natal Lieut-Governor 1875–1880 and Governor 1882–1885, made a series of watercolour copies of the rock paintings between 1876 and 1889.

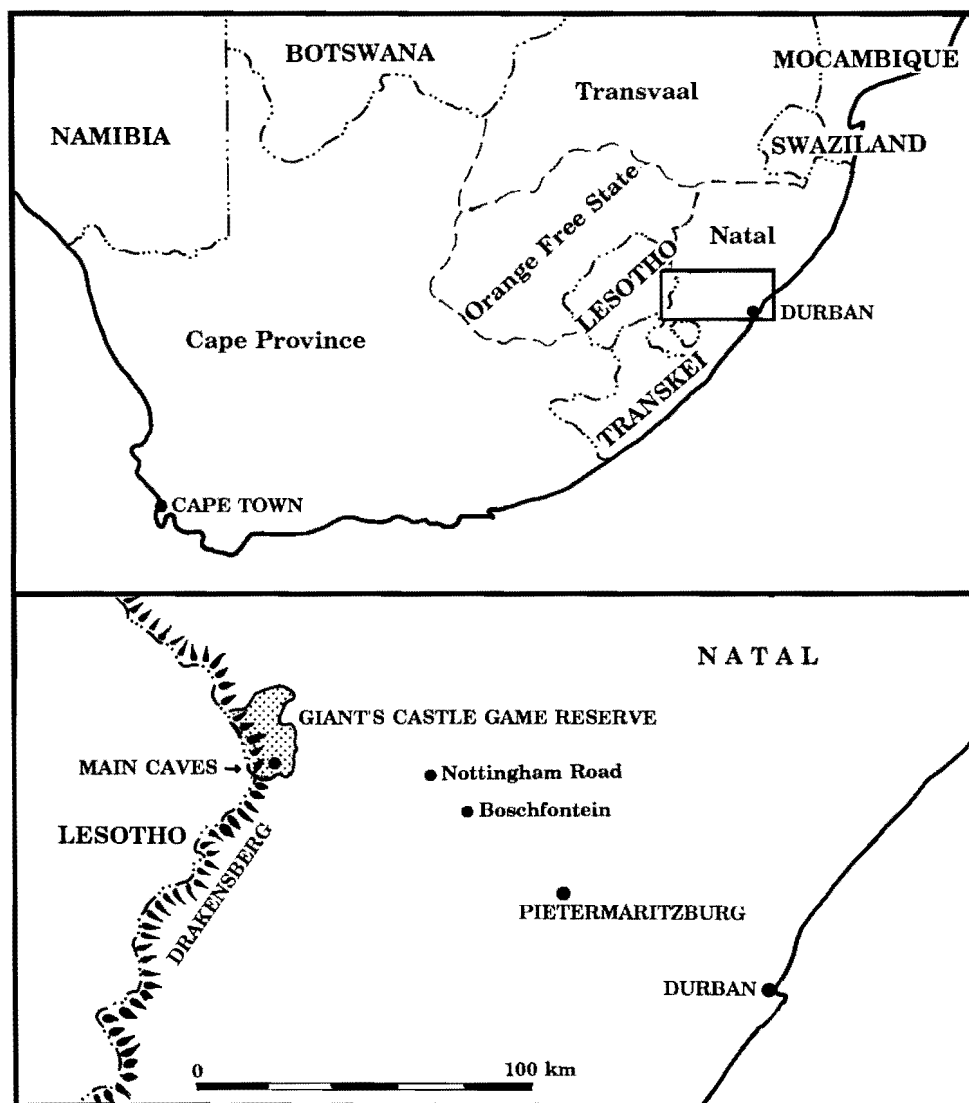


Fig. 1. The position of Main Caves within the Giant's Castle Game Reserve, Natal.

Mark Hutchinson had moved to Natal from Britain in 1861, at the age of 30, with his wife and one year old son Graham. They settled in the Karkloof where, in 1874 he bought the farm Boschfontein (Fig. 1.) near Lidgetton. He returned permanently to England at the end of the century, remarried in 1906 and died in Cornwall in 1908 (Jones 1992).

Graham Hutchinson became a prominent Natal farmer and hunter, donating many bird and small mammal specimens to the Natal Society between 1892 and 1900 (Natal Museum Annual Report 1906). He continued to farm at Boschfontein and died there in 1928 (Jones 1992).

It was no doubt Mark's reputation as an accomplished artist that led to Bulwer's 1876 request that he copy the rock paintings in the Bushman's River Valley at Giant's Castle (Natal Museum Ethno. Cat. 344, Rudner 1970). Further information on the Hutchinsons' recording project is available from the reports of a subsequent rock art recorder, L. E. Tylor (1893) who copied rock paintings in Natal for his uncle E. B. Tylor, curator of the Pitt-Rivers Museum in Oxford.

Although Vinnicombe's (1976: 116–117) extensive research found references to slightly earlier copies than those made by the Hutchinsons, she was unable to locate any and concluded that the Hutchinson copies are the earliest surviving copies from Natal.

We have been able to locate and photograph 44 copies of rock paintings by Mark and Graham Hutchinson. Eleven of these are in the Natal Museum rock art catalogue (A70–A76) and were evidently donated by Sir H. E. Bulwer to the Natal Society in 1903. Dr Warren, first Director of the Natal Museum, in his Annual Report for the year 1904 notes that the copies were 'tracings' of rock paintings 'carefully prepared by Mr Graham Hutchinson about 20 years ago'. None of the extant copies is signed, but some have a date of 1889.

The other 33 copies are in the Library of Parliament, Cape Town, being part of the Mendelssohn Collection. This collection of copies comprises 18 signed and dated reproductions in frames (Accession Nos. 242–245, 248–253, 256–257, 260–265), a small album (Cat. No. 759.968 HUT., Accession No. 6594, Hutchinson, M & G) of nine facsimiles, all but one signed and dated and a large album (Cat. No. 759.968 HUT., Hutchinson, Mark 1879, Accession No. 1872) containing seven copies, unsigned and only pages 5 to 7 dated 1879. Also framed is the sketch of 'Bushmen preparing their rock for the drawings' signed by Mark Hutchinson and dated 1876 (Accession No. 109, Willcox 1963: 10, Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1992: x). Although there were 'Bushmen' in the Natal Drakensberg almost up to that time, there is no reason to believe that the Hutchinsons actually saw the artists at work.

During the 1870s it would have taken several days to reach Giant's Castle from Lidgetton; a journey of an hour by car today. The journey would not have been undertaken lightly nor often in those days. The area was fairly inaccessible and the mode of transport would have been horses and ox wagons as described by Tylor (1893) two decades later.

.... we got one wheel up to the axles in a hole and were only extricated after two hours of digging, flogging oxen and bad language. in one place when on the slope of a mountain side narrowly escaping turning over, which would have put an end to the expedition. gave us graphic details as to the horrors of the track up the Bushman's Pass.

An incident, illustrated in the Hutchinson sketch 'Through Natal – a slight hitch' (Fig. 2 – Howick Museum 05/1826/24) shows that the Hutchinsons had similar experiences.



Fig. 2. 'Through Natal – a slight hitch', Hutchinson pen and ink. (Howick Museum 05/1826/24).

AN ASSESSMENT OF THE HUTCHINSONS' WORK

Apart from the rock art copies, other works by Mark and Graham Hutchinson have survived including pencil and ink drawings and water colours, now at the Howick Museum (Hurst papers Cat. No. 1826). These include landscapes, portraits, still lifes and animal scenes, but no rock art. Among them is a detailed pencil drawing by Graham of the view from the spur immediately below Main Caves looking down the Bushman's River Valley (Fig. 3). This work is not dated, but could have been drawn in the 1870s when he and Mark were copying the paintings. It is no more skilful than other work Graham produced while in his teens in the 1870s.

Before we turn to their rock art copies we should take a brief look at the Hutchinsons' other artistic achievements. Some of their rock art copies have a rather coarse and insensitive rendering of the originals compared with work by the better copyists of more recent years. Examples discussed below clearly show that the Stone Age art presented the Hutchinsons with an unfamiliar world, both as to style and content. In extreme cases this led to incorrect interpretation and reproduction – such as the eland seen by them as an antbear (Fig. 33). Likewise many of their captions contain interpretations with which we would disagree today, however, we have retained them for reference purposes in this paper. At another level they were not



Fig. 3. 'Durnford's Camp; below the Bushman's Caves, Drakensberg Mountains. Pen & ink drawing from nature by Nimrod'. GH, undated (Howick Museum 05/3188).

attuned to the stylistic norms of the rock art and, perhaps for this reason, did not always do justice to the aesthetic value of the originals in their copies. We should however, make it clear that this was not due to any lack of artistic ability on the part of Mark or Graham.

Both father and son showed a natural talent for drawing at an early age and both could do meticulously observed, naturalistic work. Mark's portrait of a school friend in 1844 shows what he was capable of at the age of 13 years (Fig. 4 – Howick Museum 05/4547). Similarly the earliest work we could find by Graham is a fine pencil and watercolour drawing of a dead bird done in 1872 when he was just 12 years old (Fig. 5 – Howick Museum 05/4548).

We have been unable to find any written account of the Hutchinsons' recording project other than a brief note (Hutchinson 1883). According to this they visited the caves on three separate occasions. This is substantiated by the initials and dates on some of the copies – 1876, 1877 and 1879. Two copies in the Natal Museum have a later date of 1889 and possibly were made by Graham alone.

Hutchinson (1883) recognised four classes of paintings and made representative copies of each class except his 'obscene class, which is not a large one'. He evidently regarded paintings of men with penises as obscene since, in the one such scene from which he copied (Figs 7–9) he omitted the penises. His second class is 'caricature, rudely, but very spiritedly drawn in black paint'. The third class represents 'fights and hunts, a large and interesting class' and the fourth is his 'higher class of Bushman drawings' which reflect 'very remarkable powers of observation and skill'.



Fig. 4. Pencil portrait of a school fellow by Mark Hutchinson, aged 13 (Howick Museum 05/4547).

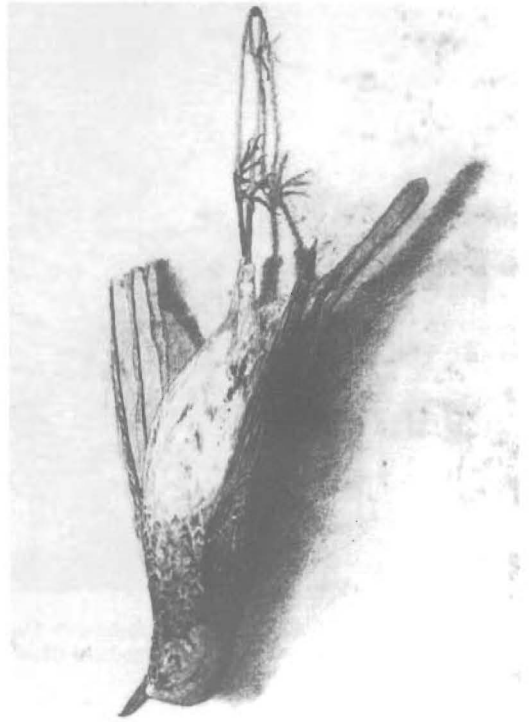


Fig. 5. Pencil and wash sketch 'Field Fare - from a dead bird' by Graham Hutchinson, aged 12 (Howick Museum 05/4548).

His comments on the use of perspective, foreshortening and shading in some of the paintings show that he did have an aesthetic appreciation of them.

On the question of how the Hutchinsons made their copies we have found references only by other commentators. Tylor (1893) mentions that the Hutchinsons had 'traced' the paintings. Ergates (1905) illustrates copies made by G. Hutchinson and states 'the outlines being traced, and the colouring being done on the spot'. Mark, in his published (1883) note, failed to mention exactly how they copied the paintings, but did state that they took great care with 'accuracy of shape and colour' and that they did not allow their 'own feelings' to influence their copies. He gives as an example the shaded eland which was compared by a professional artist Mr E. Rawlins on site with the original and declared 'substantially correct, [although] a slight advantage in spirit of outline still remained in the original' (Hutchinson 1883). There is a second version of this eland, undated and unsigned (Fig. 59) on which is written 'Eland in original position - colour of painting and rock almost exact' which shows the eland in a different position and with slightly different details. The two copies suggest that one of the Hutchinsons was not satisfied with the first version and therefore did a second copy on site, perhaps on a subsequent visit to Giant's Castle. We were surprised to find, after a prolonged search, that the original is in fact upside

down on the rock (Fig. 60), which makes the Hutchinson comment about 'eland in original position' misleading.

To establish whether the copies were traced or done freehand we retraced the Hutchinson copies in the Natal museum collection onto transparent film, took these new tracings to the site and placed them over the originals. In each case the copies were roughly the same size as the original paintings, but did not show the close degree of fit that we would expect of copies today. In several cases parts of the figures, notably legs were out by as much as 1–2 cm and in most cases there was sufficient discrepancy to indicate that the copies were not based on tracings. It seems that the Hutchinson copies were essentially freehand, but with the use of some measurements to reproduce actual size.

A factor which complicates our task of comparing the copies with the originals is the Hutchinsons' use of artistic licence. This can be seen in their landscapes where, for example in Graham's view down the valley from the site (Fig. 3) most of the detail is accurate down to the path and the stunted trees growing on a large rock to right of centre, though some rock formations are exaggerated as is the vertical scale. Moreover, the bottom right corner has been greatly adapted to conform to the tenets of the 19th century landscape genre. Similarly in Mark's 'Bushmen preparing their rock for their drawing' (Willcox 1963: 10) there is no evidence that he actually saw the original artists at work and indeed the Giant's Castle Peak, shown on the skyline, is actually invisible from the view point in the South Cave.

Among the rock art copies there are also examples of artistic licence. At least seven of the copies are composites where individual figures have been taken from their contexts and juxtaposed on the paper with others from more distant parts of the site. Examples of this include Mark's 'caricature figures' (Figs 7–8) and 'cooking' (Fig. 39) which was worked on by both father and son. They also tended to include eyes and other features on figures where there is no such trace today (eg. Fig. 33).

Given the attitude of settlers towards the people of the land, the prudery of the Victorian era, and the lack of understanding of the art at that time, the Hutchinsons' work is a remarkable and valuable record. Most of the copies show sufficient accuracy to give us the rare opportunity of comparing images from the nineteenth century with the surviving originals today.

THE PAINTINGS AND THE COPIES COMPARED

Giant's Castle Main Caves are really large rock shelters in tall overhanging cliffs. Smaller caves penetrate the rock face at several points (Fig. 6). The cliffs, in cave sandstone of the Clarens Formation, are on both sides of the spur separating the upper course of the Bushman's River from its tributary Two Dassie Stream. The paintings occur in three separate areas at the foot of the cliff. Hughes (1965), in his records of the site, divided it into North (NC) and South Caves (SC), which are about 100 metres apart. In this paper we recognise the significant division of the two parts of Hughes' SC, which are about 70 metres apart, and call the further section South South Cave (SSC).

Today access to the group of sites is controlled by the Natal Parks Board who have fenced it and have a staff member on site acting as guard and guide. The SC contains a site museum including material excavated here and a 'Bushman' diorama, while

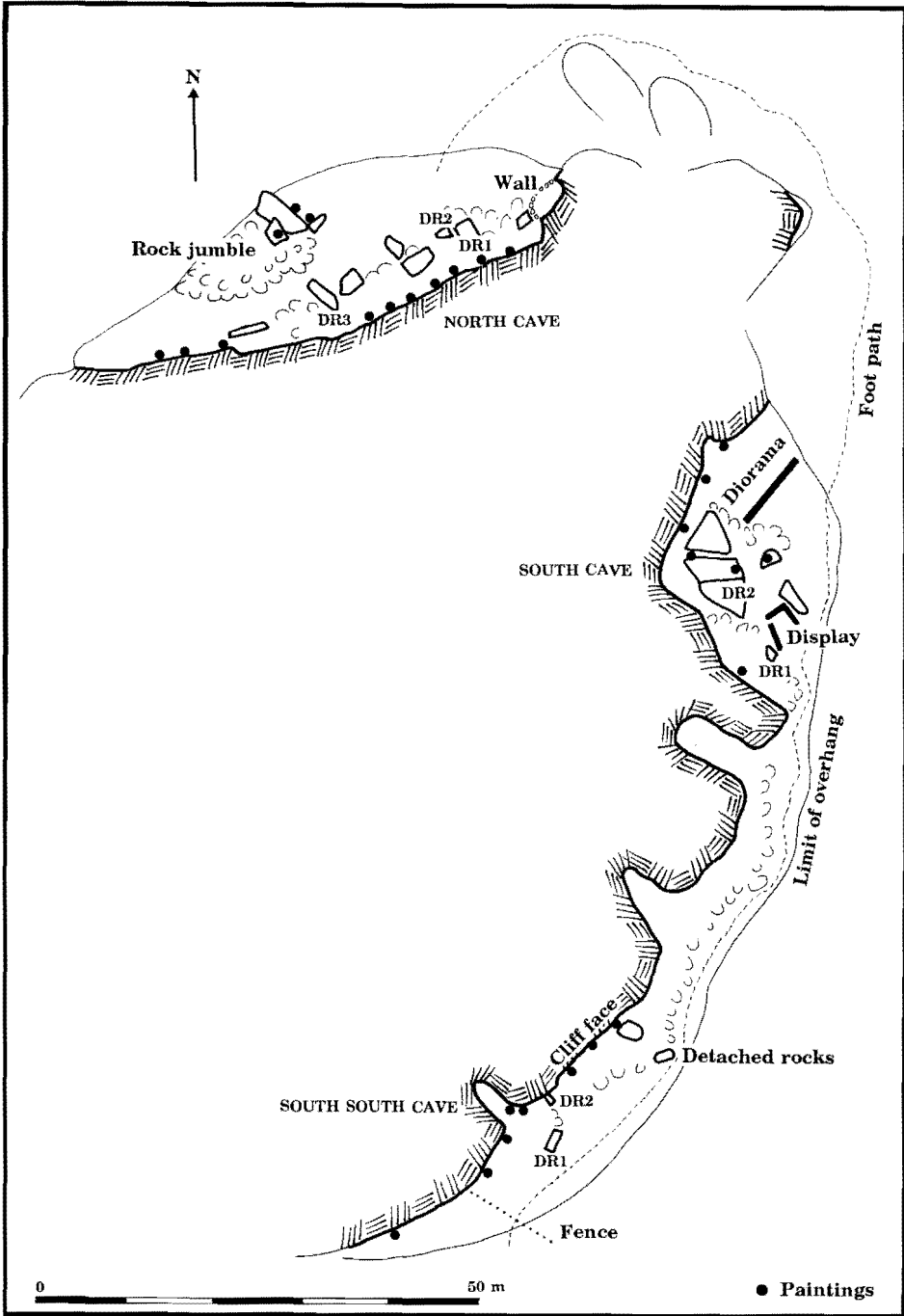


Fig. 6. Plan of Main Caves, Giant's Castle Game Reserve. DR = detached rocks.

the NC has display panels to help visitors appreciate the complexity of the rock paintings.

A basic assumption of the present study is that all the Hutchinson copies were from originals at Main Caves. While we are unable to establish this for certain, there are several sources of evidence to support this view. Tylor, in his report (1893) on his meeting with one of the Hutchinsons at the site states that Hutchinson 'was unaware that there were paintings anywhere else but these caves.' We have been able to locate many of the originals from which the Hutchinson copies were made and all of these are at Main Caves. We have compared the other copies with extensive photographic records from other Drakensberg sites at the Natal Museum and South African Museum, but have not found any that match. Likewise we conducted further field recording in shelters near Main Caves, but none of these paintings matched Hutchinson copies. We have also consulted on the Hutchinson copies with other rock art researchers experienced in this part of the Drakensberg, but they too have not been able to identify paintings from any sites other than Main Caves. We have therefore concluded that the copies most probably all derive from this group of sites.

From the dates of the copies it appears that the Hutchinsons worked roughly from left to right – the earliest copies are from the SSC and the last from the NC.

We likewise worked from left to right and have numbered the Hutchinson copies accordingly. In describing the paintings we have used Hutchinson's original captions when available.

We photographed the 44 copies, representing 82 figures or groups of figures. Four of the Natal Museum copies are of figures or groups covered also by copies in the Library of Parliament. Armed with photographic prints and with the help of Hughes' (1965) written description of the paintings and Tylor's (1893) unpublished report, we searched the walls of, and the detached rocks in, the caves and we photographed the original paintings from which the Hutchinson copies were made. Six visits totalling 61 hours at the site were made.

Most of the figures that we found were fairly evident. Several are well known and therefore required no searching. Others had to be teased out of complex scenes. In some cases, especially where originals have seriously deteriorated, similarity was not sufficient for us to include them in the 'found' category.

In the following three sections we compare each Hutchinson copy with the original painting. We illustrate several of these pairs to document the range of deterioration observed today. However in some cases the originals are significantly clearer on the rock and in colour photography than they appear in the monochrome photographic reproduction used here.

Today we regard the rock paintings of Giant's Castle as falling into two stylistic and chronological categories. The majority are not dated and belong to a general category which includes all that apparently precede contact with the expanding colonial frontier, i.e. before about 1830. This category includes a wide range of styles including the therianthrope figures and shaded polychromes for which the Drakensberg art is so well known. The second category can be dated to the period about 1830–1870 on the basis of exotic content, notably horses, brimmed hats and firearms. Vinnicombe's (1976) work in the southern Natal Drakensberg has shown that in addition to dateable subject matter this category is characterised by a suite of

stylistic features and a marked preference for particular colours – black, red-orange and yellow rather than the darker reds which predominate in the earlier category.

The three painted areas of Main Caves show very distinctive patterning in terms of these two categories of paintings. SSC contains only the nineteenth century category while SC and NC contain a vast predominance of the earlier group. The two latter areas each have a single detached rock with nineteenth century paintings, but all other paintings are from the earlier category. Giant's Castle marks the northern extent of the nineteenth century style which is such a feature of the art in the southern Natal Drakensberg (Mazel 1981).

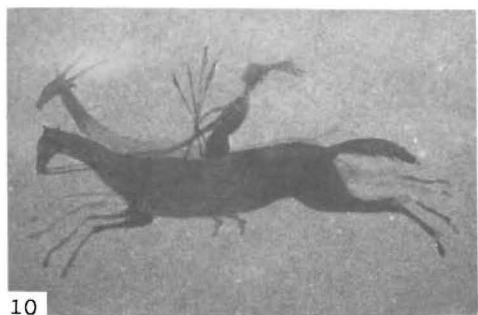
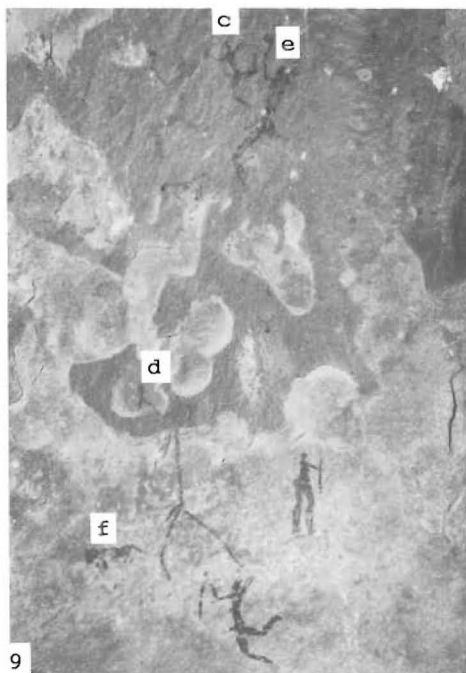
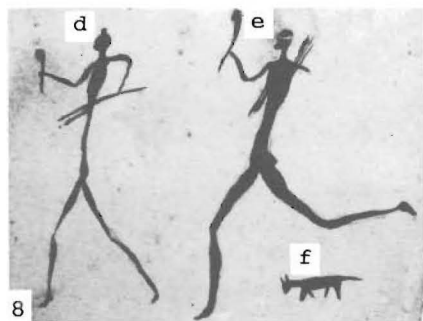
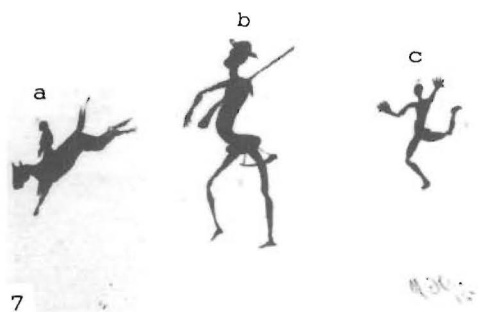
Paintings in the South South Cave

There are a few paintings just outside the present security fence (ie. to the left of it when facing the cliff) in the SSC, but the first Hutchinson copies (Figs 7–8) are from a group of eight figures (Fig. 9) just inside the fence. In 1876 Mark selected four of these, three men and a dog (Figs 7–8), but repositioned them, placing them on two different sheets of paper. These men presumably belonged to his 'obscene' class as he omitted their penises, but on one he showed the exaggerated fingers which are still visible today (Figs 7c 9c). Other details, however, have since disappeared including, on one figure (Figs 8e 9e), the headband, lower portion of legs and the portion of 'sticks' in front of the body together with the head of another (Figs 8d 9d). The dog, too, is less complete today (Figs 8f 9f), and all four are relatively faded.

Ten metres right of the fence a small cave penetrates the rock face. On either side there are paintings; on the right we found Mark's 1876 'chasing a buck' (Fig. 10) which he depicted horizontally although the original is running almost vertically downwards (Fig. 11). Today some of the features are faded away including the rider's head, his feet and some of the spears. Nearby are Mark's 1876 'Bushman riding' (Figs 12–13) and 'Man with powder horn' (Fig. 7b) which are likewise faded and 'Lion hunt' (Figs 14–15) which today is smudged. To the right of the 'Lion hunt' Tylor (Vinnicombe 1966) copied a horseman which has completely disappeared due to spalling. Around the corner to the right is 'Giving an injection', where the arms and chest are now missing from spalling and two men with raised sticks, all of which have lost their white painted detail and appear as faint grey today. These are too faded to illustrate. We were able to identify them only with the help of Tylors' copy which shows their position in relation to the other paintings on this surface.

Graham selected from a group his 'fighting figure' (Fig. 16) which though more faded today (Fig. 17) shows no further exfoliation since the copy was made in 1879. Eleven metres around the corner Mark's & Graham's 1879 'White man on a grey cob' is just recognisable, but indistinct through exfoliation and fading, and there is no trace of the bridle (Figs 18–19). There are other paintings on this wall, some very brightly coloured which do not appear to have been copied by the Hutchinsons.

In front of the small cave are some fallen, detached rocks (Fig. 6). On two of these are faded paintings. Detached Rock 1 (DR1) is 10.5 m from the fence and furthest from the rock face; Detached Rock 2 (DR2) is 12.5 m from the fence and against the rock face. On DR1 we found Graham's 1879 'Hunting an eland', now very faded with the horseman almost vanished (Figs 20–21). On the face of DR2, Mark's 1876 white 'Eland' is today almost invisible and splattered with bald ibis (*Geronticus*



Figs 7–11. 7–8. 'Caricature figures' selected partly from 9, MH 1876 (LoP 6594). 7. a – was not found, b – is about 10 metres to the right of 7c and 8 – too faded to illustrate. Its chest and arm have exfoliated. 8. d, e & f are seen in 9. 9. Group of figures (NM 1993 photo). c is 7c. and d, e & f are in 8. 10–11. 'Chasing a buck', MH 1876 (LoP 249) and NM 1993 photo. The original is running down the rock face.

calvus) droppings; a colony of which now roosts in the rock face above (Figs 22–23). On the north face of DR2 is Mark's & Graham's 1879 'Pig' which is now very faded (Figs 24–25). The original appears to be pursued by men on horseback and a modern interpretation would be a 'rain animal' rather than a pig (eg. Vinnicombe 1976: 45). Also here are three of Graham's 1879 'fighting figures', but in very faded condition. On this surface are several other faded black paintings of horsemen and running figures which may be the originals of some of those we could not identify with

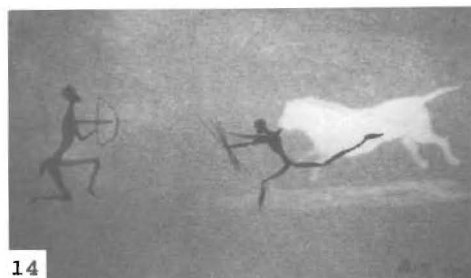
certainly because they are so faint, eg. horsemen and people with shields. Hughes missed the paintings on these rocks when making his report in 1965 and we likewise missed them on our earlier visits, which indicates the extent to which they have deteriorated.



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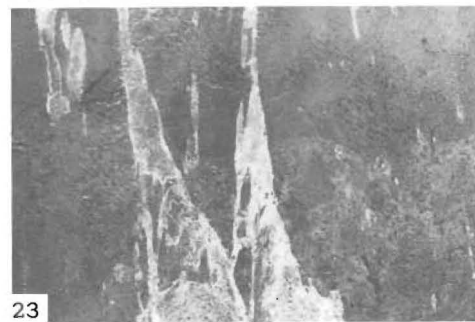
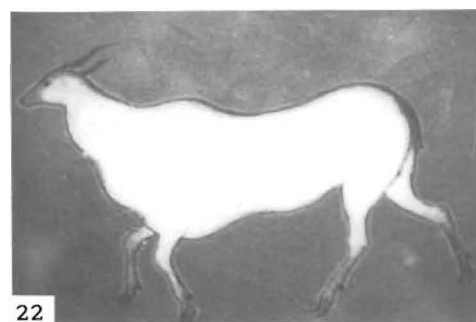
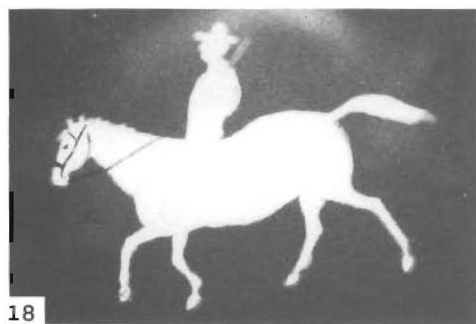


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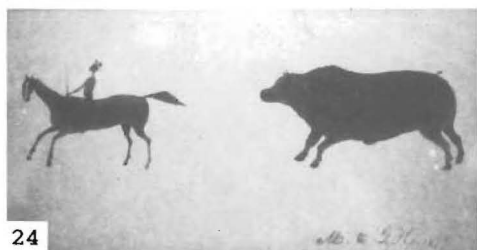
Figs 12–17. 12–13. 'Bushman riding', MH 1876 (LoP 261) and NM 1993 photo. The horse on the right of 12 was not found. 14–15. 'Lion hunt', MH 1876 (LoP 252) and NM 1993 photo. The figure on the left of 14 could be one of more than twenty faded figures further up the rock face. 16–17. 'Fighting figures' MH & GH 1879 (LoP 6594) and NM 1993 photo. The two figures on the left of 16 were not identified for certain, but could be among the faded figures on Detached Rock I. The exfoliation (Fig. 17 right) has not increased since the copy was made – the monochrome photo fails to pick up the paint.



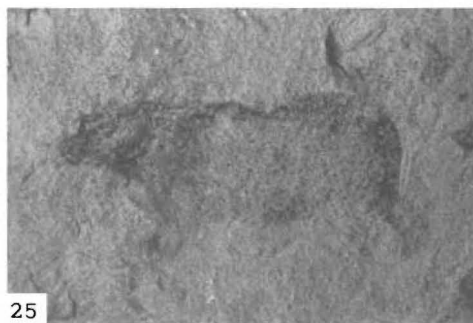
Figs 18–23. 18–19. 'White man on a grey cob', MH & GH 1879 (LoP 260) and NM 1993 photo. Note severe exfoliation. 20–21. 'Hunting an eland', GH 1879 (LoP 250) and NM 1993 photo. Note horseman above eland has almost disappeared. 22–23. 'Eland', MH 1876 (LoP 264) and NM 1993 photo. Note faint eland under the bird droppings.

We know that several of the missing paintings were originally in this shelter. Tylor (1893) records Hutchinson pointing out, in this shelter, the painting 'Cape Mounted Rifles' – three mounted soldiers riding abreast (Fig. 26). Tylor comments 'the horses were partly visible, but the riders appear to have been rubbed out'. Patricia Vinnicombe (1976) records that in 1967 she could find only traces of the legs and tails with the help of Tylor's 1893 report. We were unable to find any traces at all. Further to the right there are a few more paintings spread out along the rock face, but they were apparently not copied by the Hutchinsons.

Most of the copies for which we have been unable to find the originals fall into the nineteenth century painting category in terms of their content and style. As mentioned above, apart from SSC there are only the two detached rocks in SC and NC where nineteenth century paintings are evident today. We therefore consider that most of the missing paintings of this category were in SSC.



24



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26

ORIGINAL NOT FOUND



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Figs 24–28. 24–25. 'Pig', probably a rain animal, MH & GH 1879 (LoP 262) and NM 1993 photo. The horseman at left was not found. 26. 'Cape Mounted Rifles', MH 1876 (LoP 265). Faint traces were found by P. Vinnicombe in 1967, but we were unable to find any at all. 27–28. Kaross-class figures and buck, undated (NM A76), and NM 1993 photo. The second stick is not visible today and the third figure has lost its head through exfoliation.

Paintings in the South Cave

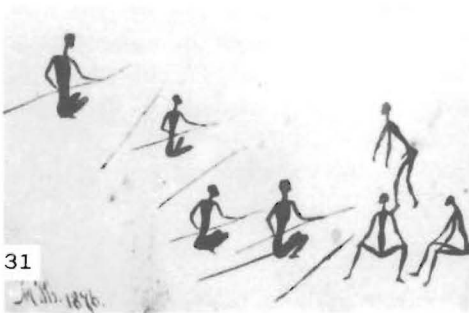
Most paintings in SC are on detached rocks. On the actual wall there are some paintings on the left, but the only example for which we have a Hutchinson copy is towards the centre and behind the large detached rocks. This copy is of three bichrome kaross-clad figures and a rhebuck (Figs 27–28), part of a larger frieze. We note some deterioration to the horizontal white 'sticks' and the right hand human has lost its head.



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Figs 29–34. 29–30. 'Koranna men and women', undated (LoP 6594, NM A76), two copies with similarities, originals not found. 31–32. 'Fishing and gymnastic exercises', MH 1876 (LoP 6594) and NM 1993 photo. Note vandalism in the form of pencil outlines on figures at top and right. 33–34. 'Supposed antbear', really a recumbent polychrome eland with scratched outline. GH 1876 (LoP 242) and NM 1993 photo.

Taking the painted detached rocks in turn from the left of the shelter, we start with DR1 which has a panel with the only nineteenth century paintings in this cave. This is just behind and above the left hand display case of the site museum. This panel shows considerable deterioration, but among the figures are some of women which might be the original for Hutchinson's 'Koranna men and women' (Fig. 29). A second Hutchinson copy (Fig. 30) includes a different rendition of the two right hand figures which in the second copy are placed on the left and have two other figures added to the right. We have not been able to find the originals of any of these six figures, but some of them do resemble some of the faded examples on this rock so they may have come from here.

Behind the central display case is a large free-standing rock (DR2) covered with polychrome paintings, many superimposed. At the top of this rock is Mark's 1876 'Fishing and gymnastics' scene (Figs 31–32). We noted no deterioration, but four figures have been outlined in pencil. Below this and to the left we recognised, only after several searches, Graham's 1876 'supposed antbear' (Fig. 33). The original is clearly a reclining eland, the white neck and head still evident (Fig. 34). Graham mistook the eland's forequarter for the 'antbear's' head and natural rock markings for its eyes. The fact that he missed the white neck and head suggests that it was no clearer then than it is today. We were unable to find an original for the head with downswepthorns at the top of this copy. Also on this rock are the originals of four human figures, and an antelope. We illustrate the antelope (Figs 35–36). The four human figures are still clear today, but do not show up well in monochrome photography. The women seem unaltered, but the large piece of exfoliation has damaged the antelope's rump. This seems to have been caused by deliberate vandalism as peck marks surround it (Fig. 36).

In the SC the original paintings identified from Hutchinson copies in general show far less deterioration than those of the SSC.

Paintings in the North Cave

The NC is about 100 metres around the corner from SC (Fig. 6) and overlooks the Bushman's River and the path up to the caves. Here is a treasury of rock art – virtually all suitable surfaces being covered. There are far more paintings here than in the other two caves, more superimpositioning and complex panels and many examples of shaded polychromes and therianthropic figures. The paintings are on the back wall and on 11 detached rocks below. Most of the copies from here which are signed and dated were made by Mark in 1879, but a few are from 1889.

To the left is the first large panel of paintings in which there are several eland including the original of the 'Eland bulls fighting' (Figs 37–38). This shows little if any deterioration.

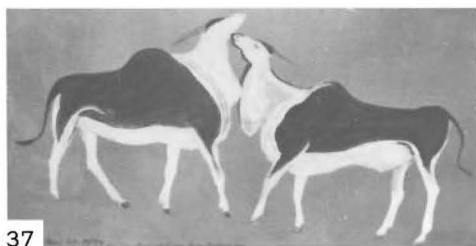
Several metres to the right is the large central panel from which they selected several paintings. Because of the acute upper edge of the large fallen rock below this panel it is difficult to view these paintings close up. Perhaps for this reason their copies from here are not as accurate as most of the others. The selection includes 'Cooking', by both Mark and Graham in 1879, which is a misinterpretation since they apparently took the skin bag with tassels to represent a pot on a fire (Figs 39–40). This copy is a false juxtaposition for the snake which is from the detached



35



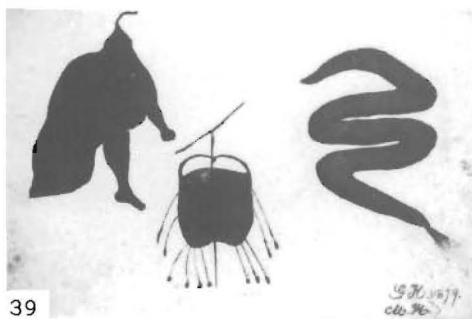
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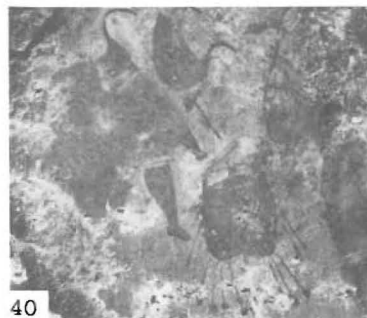
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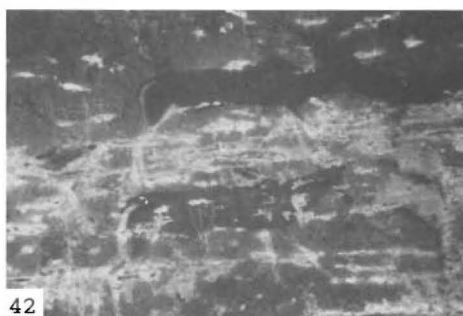
Figs 35–40. 35–36. 'Rude sketch in Bushman's Cave', MH 1876 (LoP 6594) and NM 1993 photo. Note vandalism, pecking and removal of spall. 37–38. 'Eland bulls fighting', undated (NM A72) and NM 1993 photo. 39–40. 'Cooking', really a skin bag, MH & GH 1879 (LoP 245) and NM 1993 photo. The monochrome photograph (40) does not show the weathered though rounded edge of the kaross. See Fig. 63 for original of the snake.

rock DR3 about 12 metres to the right. Today the lower end of the kaross ends in a rounded shape, not the point shown in the copy, but this is likely to be an error of copying rather than the result of deterioration. The two hartebeest seem to have suffered in the past 100 years. The head of the upper one is obscured by a broad smudge and both show exfoliation (Figs 41–42). However, as most of the detail is still visible today we can not be sure that the Hutchinsons did not simply ignore the

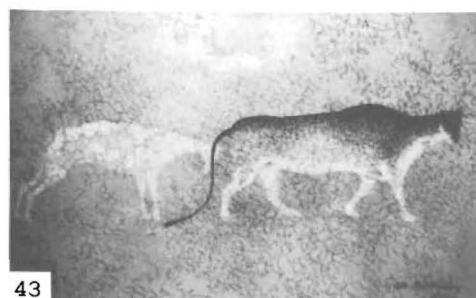
exfoliation and restore the complete forms. With 'Tiger and dog' Mark took considerable liberties – for example shading the feline and substantially altering its legs, also indicating an exfoliating rock surface (Figs 43–44). The copy is therefore of limited use as an indicator of deterioration, but the surviving details (see also Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1992: 49) would suggest little change. Mark's 'White man carrying eland' (LoP 1872) is a misnomer for an eland superimposed on a therianthrope, and is also a poor copy. We illustrate a far better Hutchinson copy (Fig. 45) which, though water damaged, indicates little if any deterioration of the



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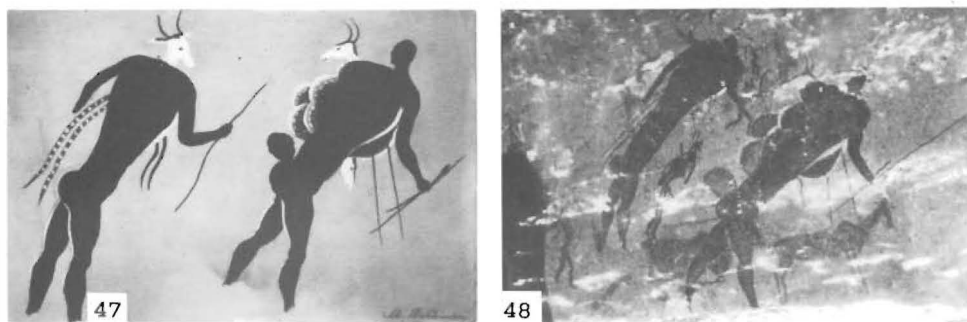
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Figs 41–46. 41–42. Two hartebeest, undated (NM A75) and NM 1993 photo. Note paint smudge on head of top animal. 43–44. 'Tiger and dog', MH 1879 (LoP 256) and NM 1993 photo. 45–46. 'Curious figure', better of two Hutchinson versions, undated (NM A70) and NM 1993 photo.

original (Fig. 46). Exfoliation has destroyed the ends of the therianthrope's legs, but it is not clear whether this is subsequent to Hutchinson's copy or not. Mark's 'Men carrying bucks' is clearly not a tracing since the outline is substantially incorrect (Figs 47–48). He also gave the right hand figure a human instead of its antelope head (compare Lewis-Williams and Dowson 1992: 44–46). We can see no evidence of deterioration.

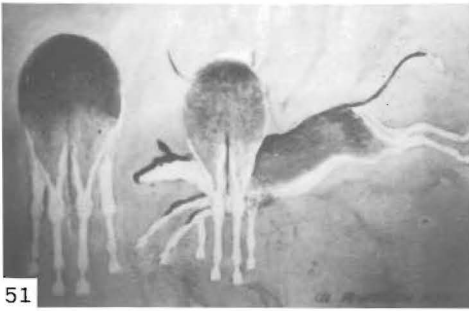
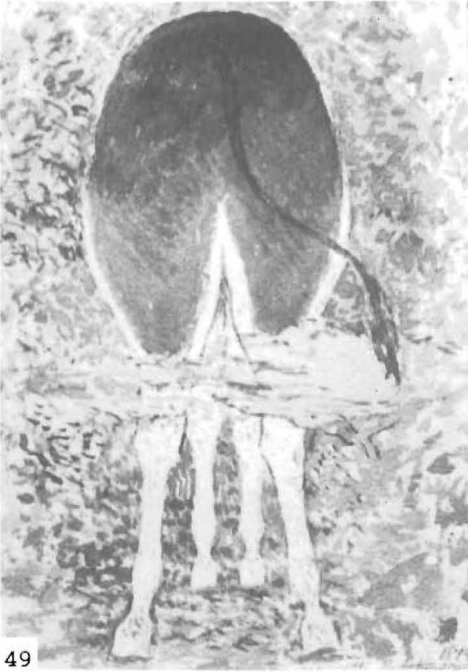


Figs 47–48. 'Men carrying bucks', MH 1879 (LoP 1872) and NM 1993 photo. The antelope head on the right hand figure (48) was not copied.

From the next panel the Hutchinsons selected eight walking therianthropes from a larger group. Today these are seriously damaged by elongated patches of natural exfoliation along bedding planes in the rock. The copies show them as complete figures, but we feel unsure as to whether the damage really postdates the copy or whether the copyist merely filled in the exfoliated portions. We have therefore not reproduced this illustration.

On the detached rock DR1 are a number of paintings. Both Hutchinson (1883) and Tylor (1893) commented on the foreshortening among these antelope figures. Compared to the copy (Fig. 49) the tail in the original is just visible today and a large spall has removed the lower right legs (Fig. 50). Tylor likewise commented that the tails were nearly gone at his visit though Hutchinson said they had been clear. We are not certain to which antelope this refers. The animal figures (Figs 51–52) seem virtually unchanged today though we would disagree with Mark's interpretation of the tails and the horns of the rear view antelope, the latter being ears rather than horns. However, the feline has been outlined in pencil. Despite Tylor's (1893) comments that 'according to Mr Hutchinson some of the groups which now are indistinguishable were very fine. Visitors have apparently chipped and scrawled a great deal just here', Mark's and Graham's 'Bushbuck and fawn' (Figs 53–54) also seems unchanged.

Most of the originals of Hutchinson's 1889 composite copy (Fig. 55) were found on a neighbouring rock (DR2). Ten of the 11 originals were identified, but we have illustrated only five (Figs 56–58). The missing example is a white antelope perhaps faded away entirely. The others show no visible deterioration except for some



Figs 49–52. 49–50. ‘Foreshortened eland’, MH 1879 (LoP 1872) and NM 1993 photo. Note spalling and missing right legs. The tail does not show up in the monochrome photo (50). 51–52. ‘Foreshortened elands’, MH 1879 (LoP 257) and NM 1993 photo. The horns in Fig. 51 are misrepresentations of ears which do not show up in the recent photo (52).

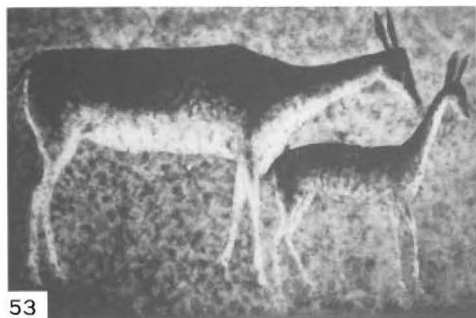
exfoliation on the back legs in Fig. 57 and perhaps rock fracture along cleavage lines in Fig. 58. Also on DR2, just above ground level to the right is the upside down, polychrome eland (Figs 59–60) mentioned above. There appears to be a little exfoliation and a piece missing from the left front leg.

On the right side of the painted section of NC is the large detached rock DR3 with numerous paintings including the originals of an eland (Figs 61–62) and the snake already mentioned (Figs 39–63). Neither shows any noticeable deterioration.

In front of DR3 and at the front of NC are two detached rocks with very faded paintings. The smaller rock has several black horsemen of the nineteenth century category, but we could not match any of these to Hutchinson copies.

CONCLUSIONS

Since the main aim of this paper is to assess the extent of deterioration in the Main Caves paintings, we have summarised our findings in Table 1. This makes two points



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Figs 53–58. 53–54. 'Bushbuck and fawn', MH & GH 1879 (LoP 243) and NM 1993 photo. 55. Composite figures, 1889 (NM A75) some of which are illustrated in NM 1993 photographs in Figs 56–58. 56. Rhebok from Fig. 55 (NM 1993 photo). 57. Animal from Fig. 55 (NM 1993 photo). Note exfoliation on legs. 58. Group of figures from Fig. 55 (NM 1993 photo). Note rock fracture along cleavage lines.

very clear: firstly that there has been a great deal of deterioration since the Hutchinsons' time. Secondly, the nineteenth century paintings have suffered far more

TABLE 1

The number of images which have suffered deterioration in 19th century and earlier paintings.

NB – Individual paintings may have sustained more than one category of damage and therefore the totals exceed the actual number of paintings in the survey.

Nature of deterioration	19th C	Earlier
Some fading	7	4
Severe fading	14	–
Parts absent as a result of fading	11	–
Exfoliation (small paper-thin pieces of rock)	3	3
Spalling (thicker and larger pieces)	1	2
Vandalism	–	3
Smudged	1	–
Bird droppings	1	–
Apparently unchanged	–	18

than the earlier category. While most of the earlier paintings show no clear evidence of deterioration, all of the nineteenth century examples have suffered. Furthermore the two categories have tended to sustain different types of damage. The earlier works show most damage from exfoliation, spalling and vandalism, with only four showing moderate fading, while all nineteenth century examples show some fading, many to the point where parts of the figures have faded away entirely. It also seems clear that, despite more than a century of documented vandalism at Main Caves, it is the natural forces of weathering that are responsible for most of the deterioration.

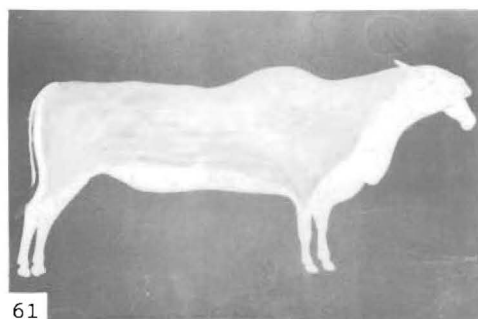
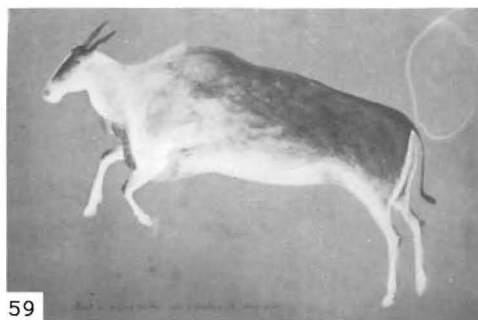
When we take into consideration the Hutchinson copies for which we have been unable to find the original paintings, the situation becomes even more acute. Table 2 shows that we found all but one of the early category of paintings, but less than half of the nineteenth century examples. The 'uncertain' category could be from either group, but most are, on stylistic grounds, likely to be nineteenth century. If we are correct in assuming that all the Hutchinson copies are from Main Caves, as argued above, then we must conclude that these missing paintings have deteriorated to the extent that they are unrecognisable today and may have vanished entirely.

Among the copies for which we were unable to find the originals are some highly distinctive figures. These include the equestrian with unusually detailed harness (Fig. 64), the horses and cattle (Fig. 65), the 'sable antelope', probably a roan, with 'secretary birds' (Fig. 66) and the unique shaded polychrome 'Bushpigs' (Fig. 67).

TABLE 2

Found and missing paintings.

	Found		Not found		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Early paintings	25	96	1	4	26	100
19th Century paintings	21	45	26	55	47	100
'Uncertain'	–	–	9	100	9	100
<i>Total</i>	46	56	36	44	82	100



SEE FIGURE 39

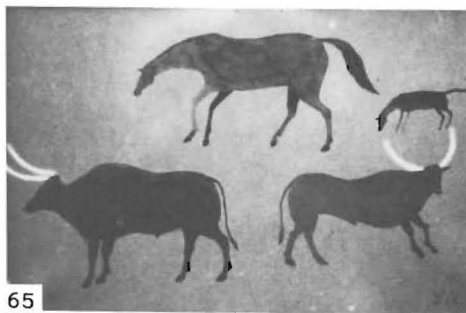


Figs 59–63. 59–60. 'Eland', the better of two Hutchinson versions, undated (NM A71) and NM 1993 photo. The eland is upside down on the rock yet note on 59 says 'Eland in original position ...'. 61–62. 'Eland', undated (NM A73) and NM 1993 photo. 63. Snake from 'Cooking' in Fig. 39, MG & GH 1879 (LoP 245) and NM 1993 photo. The snake is part of a complex scene on DR3 some 12 metres from the human figure and bag.

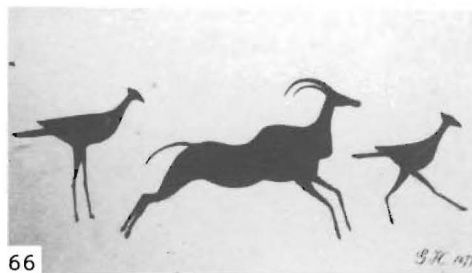
The originals of these copies, if visible today would be readily identifiable with the relevant Hutchinson copies. The figures are sufficiently rare and interesting to have attracted the attention of any serious rock art researcher, of which there have been many at Main Caves in recent decades. It therefore seems inevitable for us to conclude that these examples have indeed disappeared since the paintings were copied in the 1870s.



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Figs 64–67. Paintings not found. The fact that we were unable to locate the originals for these distinctive paintings, presumably clear in the Hutchinsons' time, suggests that they have now disappeared entirely. 64. 'White man on horseback', GH 1879 (LoP 260). 65. 'Domestic animals', GH 1877 (LoP 251). 66. 'Sable antelope and secretary birds', GH 1879 (LoP 6594). 67. 'Bushpigs', GH 1879 (LoP 263)

Our conclusion that the 19th century paintings are much more prone to deterioration is not an original observation. Vinnicombe (1966, 1976: 141), with her wide experience of the region to the south, makes the point that

The paints lack a binding medium and often appear rather powdery. ...and the paint deteriorates rapidly. It is therefore not uncommon to find the most recent paintings appearing less well preserved than the earlier.

In the specific case of the SSC the vulnerability of these late paintings is further aggravated by the poor rock surfaces. At this point of the cliff face natural denudation has undercut the sandstone exposing the underlying mudstone and shale which are both softer and more prone to surface exfoliation and disintegration. Most of the SSC paintings were done on this softer rock. However, the deterioration of nineteenth century paintings done on fallen sandstone blocks, namely DR1 in SSC and the examples in both SC and NC, show that it is the poor quality of the paint more than the rock surface that is responsible for the rapid deterioration.

We are faced with the situation where 55 % of the late period paintings have apparently deteriorated beyond recognition and the surviving examples have faded significantly since the Hutchinson copies were made. What of the situation in more recent decades? We were able to compare our new photographs with those taken by

several other rock art recorders namely Willcox who photographed here in the period between 1948 and the 1960s, Simpson from the 1960s (NM Archaeology Department records) and Hughes from 1965 (Natal Parks Board). In each case we were able to detect little or no deterioration. However, each of these records focused selectively on the better known and preserved paintings from the earlier period in NC and SC, ignoring the already deteriorated nineteenth century examples. In similar vein is the brief note by Steel (1991) who could see little deterioration in most of the Giant's Castle sites he revisited and compared with photographs he had taken forty years earlier. The exception was Barnes' Shelter where he did notice deterioration from natural causes in a shelter which, significantly, contains mainly nineteenth century paintings.

The Natal Parks Board deserves congratulations for their success in controlling vandalism in recent decades. Their current control measures at Main Caves are evidently effective despite the large numbers of visitors. Nevertheless the natural weathering processes of both paint and rock surface, about which we still know so little, are continuing. We look forward to the conclusion of Meiklejohn's current study of the weathering process and hope that it will lead to some practical steps towards preservation.

Despite these valuable efforts to preserve the paintings we must face the inevitability that many if not most of the remaining nineteenth century paintings in the Giant's Castle area and the Drakensberg further south will continue to deteriorate and disappear at a far faster rate than most of the surviving earlier paintings. *In situ* measures for preservation will probably at best be possible in only a few sites. The issue of removing rock art to a closely controlled environment, such as a museum, is a controversial one and, even assuming that a programme of removal could be established, the expense would probably limit the examples rescued to a relatively small number. Concerned individuals have for many years been aware of this set of problems which has been one of the motivating forces behind rock art recording programmes. In the specific case of the nineteenth century Drakensberg paintings many sites have been traced by Vinnicombe (1976) and photographed on panchromatic and colour slide film by Mazel (1981). These records are now curated by the Archaeology Department of the Natal Museum. However, even at the level of recording, a great deal remains to be done. Many of the known sites are not yet fully recorded in terms of tracing and photography. Furthermore there are still extensive areas, especially from East Griqualand southwards and in neighbouring Lesotho, which have not been thoroughly searched for rock art sites.

Concerned individuals and organisations as well as the relevant authorities responsible need to consider a programme of recording that should include both photography and tracing. This should fill in the gaps in existing records and cover new areas to build a record against the day when many more of these last statements from a precolonial way of life are lost for ever.

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Abbreviations:

DR — Detached rock	NC — North Cave
GH — Graham Hutchinson	NM — Natal Museum
LoP — Library of Parliament	SC — South Cave
MH — Mark Hutchinson	SSC — South South Cave

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