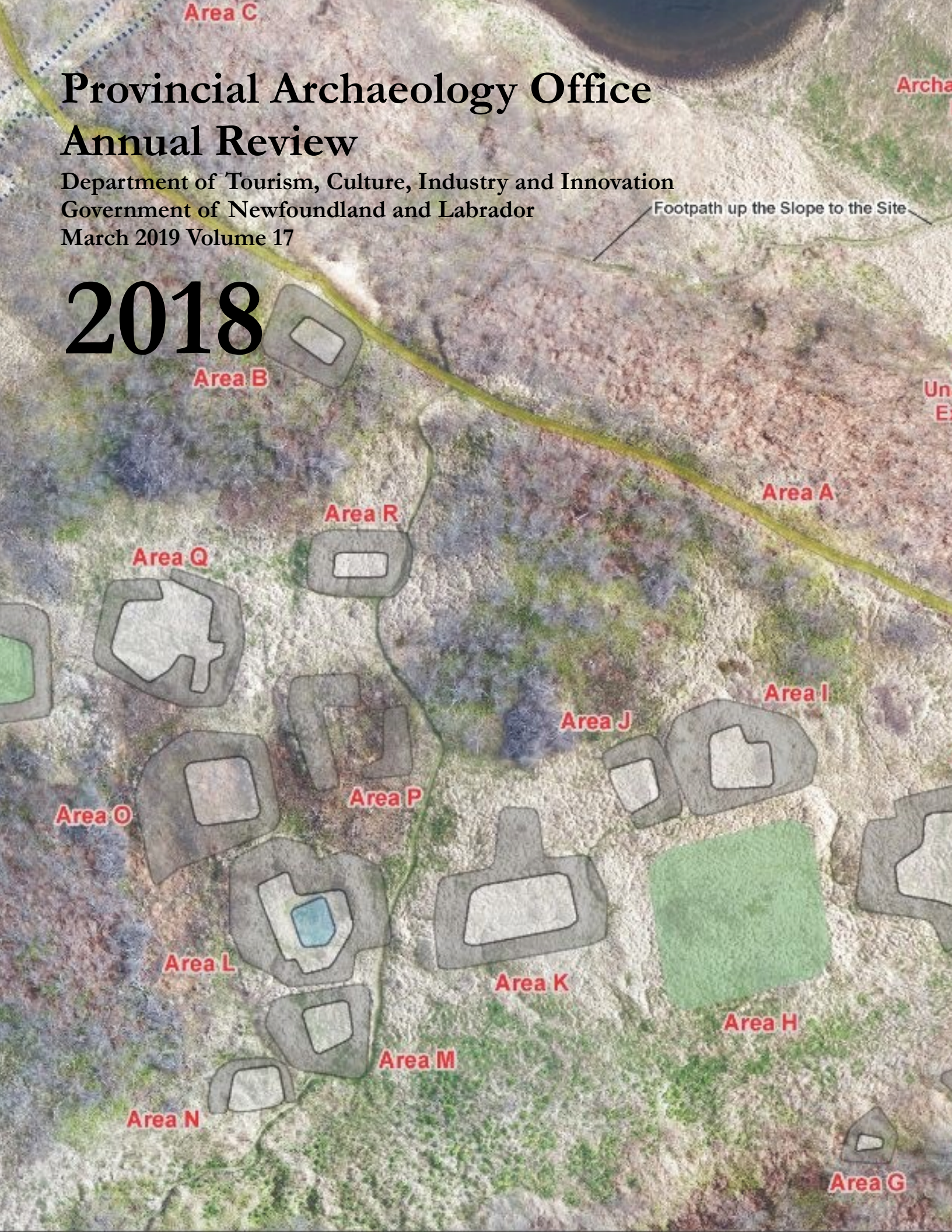


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The Avalon Historic Petroglyph Project (2018)

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Figure 1: 2017 picture of petroglyphs from Conception Bay North. Photo credit: anonymous.

This report discusses the preliminary findings of the Avalon Historic Petroglyph Project, the goals of which center around the recording, interpretation and preservation of historic graffiti and other parietal art on Newfoundland's Avalon Peninsula. Three sites were investigated during spring/fall of 2018: one in an undisclosed location in Conception Bay North; and two along the eastern shore of the Avalon, at Fermeuse and Brigus South. Below we highlight the survey, computational photography and conservation techniques used in the recording of these sites, as well as

our current thoughts on who made them, when, and what they represent.

The Conception Bay North petroglyph (hereafter referred to as CBN 1) came to our attention in fall 2017. A local resident informed us of a lichen-covered inscription inside a small cave-like crevice in the hillside behind a community in Conception Bay North. Recent cleaning of the area around the inscription revealed a small yet stunning series of glyphs including two anthropomorphs and one zoomorphic figure (Figure 1). Based upon the photographs provided, our team set into motion a plan to document and analyze elements of the petroglyphs in

2018 using both photogrammetry and Highlight-Reflectance Transformation Imaging (H-RTI) (Duffy et al. 2013; Mudge et al. 2012). The former technique enabled us to produce accurate, high-resolution 3D surface models of the rock surface on which the petroglyphs were engraved, as well as to record detailed measurements of the dimensions and morphology of individual components. H-RTI allowed us to generate a series of images of the same subject but with varying highlights and shadows, which reveal surface de-

sequence of carving and the relationship between glyphs appears to begin with two faint geometric motifs in the upper and lower parts of the panel, followed by a vulva motif and ithyphallic anthropomorph, which together form what can best be described as a symbolic copulation scene (Figure 2). Respecting this paired scene, and on a slightly different angle, the second anthropomorph and underlying quadruped appear to have been laid down next, followed by the Roman-type script which changes direc-

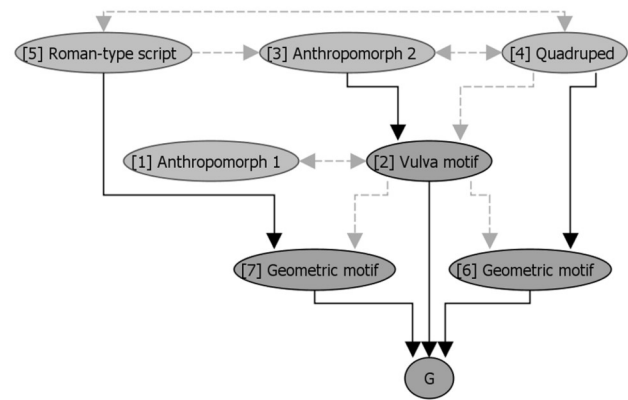
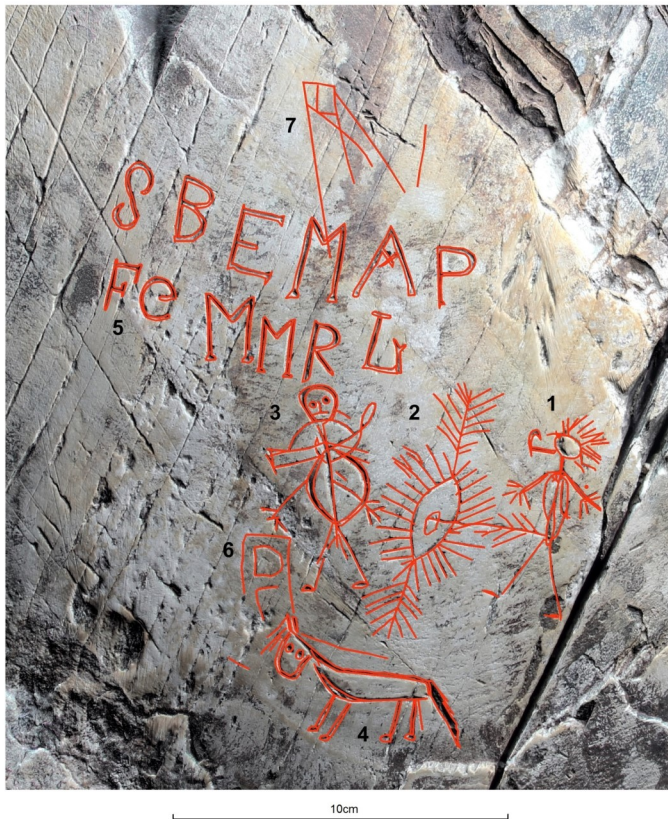


Figure 2: Line drawing interpretation of the CBN 1 petroglyphs (left) and inferred sequence of carving where ‘G’ is the rock surface (right). Image credit: Bryn Tapper

tail and information that is not visible or clear under normal light conditions.

The enhanced legibility of surface relief afforded by photogrammetry and H-RTI provided a means to analyze faint details of individual glyphs, enabling the identification of the manufacturing technique as well as the stratigraphic relationships where petroglyphs overlap. The results show the CBN 1 petroglyphs having been incised using a metal tool — likely the point and edge of a small knife. The relative

tion to avoid the second anthropomorph. The possible meanings of the glyphs and script are still being deciphered; however, based upon the isolated location of the site, the size of the glyphs, and especially the close similarities between the morphological traits of the script and motifs, they may have been carved by a single individual in a single episode.

They also appear to tell a story. One possible interpretation is that the central motifs form a life and death scene, with the copulation motif to the right

and a floating corpse-like figure rising above or leaving the body of the anthropomorph to the left. A second, related theory pertains to the stages of copulation, pregnancy and birthing.

A comparison of the CBN 1 petroglyphs to both European and Indigenous North American rock art places these motifs firmly within an Algonquian tradition. Numerous examples of the vulva and ithyphallic motifs, shown either separately or together in association, are found in the pre- and post-contact rock art of Algonquian-speaking peoples from Eastern Canada and New England; including in the famous corpus of Middle-Late Woodland petroglyphs known from Peterborough, Ontario (Lenik 2002; Vastokas and Vastokas 1973). Regionally, similar compositions are recorded in the pre- and post-contact rock art of eastern Maine and from the historic period Mi'kmaq petroglyphs at Kejimikujik Lake and Bedford Barrens in Nova Scotia (Hedden 1985, 1989; Molyneux 1984; Whitehead 1992).

As for when the CBN 1 petroglyphs were carved, the evidence currently points to an Indigenous inscription from the historic period. The 1697 or 1705 incursions by French and Wabanaki forces on English settlements in Conception Bay are one possible explanation, as the cave where the petroglyphs were carved could have served as a small shelter during either of these winter campaigns. Independent skirmishes by Mi'kmaq warriors into Conception Bay after 1706 provide another possibility (Martijn 2003: 73-74). Even a 19th-century carving is not out of the question. Given the current uncertainty, plans are underway to excavate inside the cave-like crevice in the hopes that datable material may be found. The date, nevertheless, is of secondary importance compared to its cultural attribution. If our preliminary interpretations hold true, then CBN 1 is the first Indigenous petroglyph found on the island of Newfoundland.

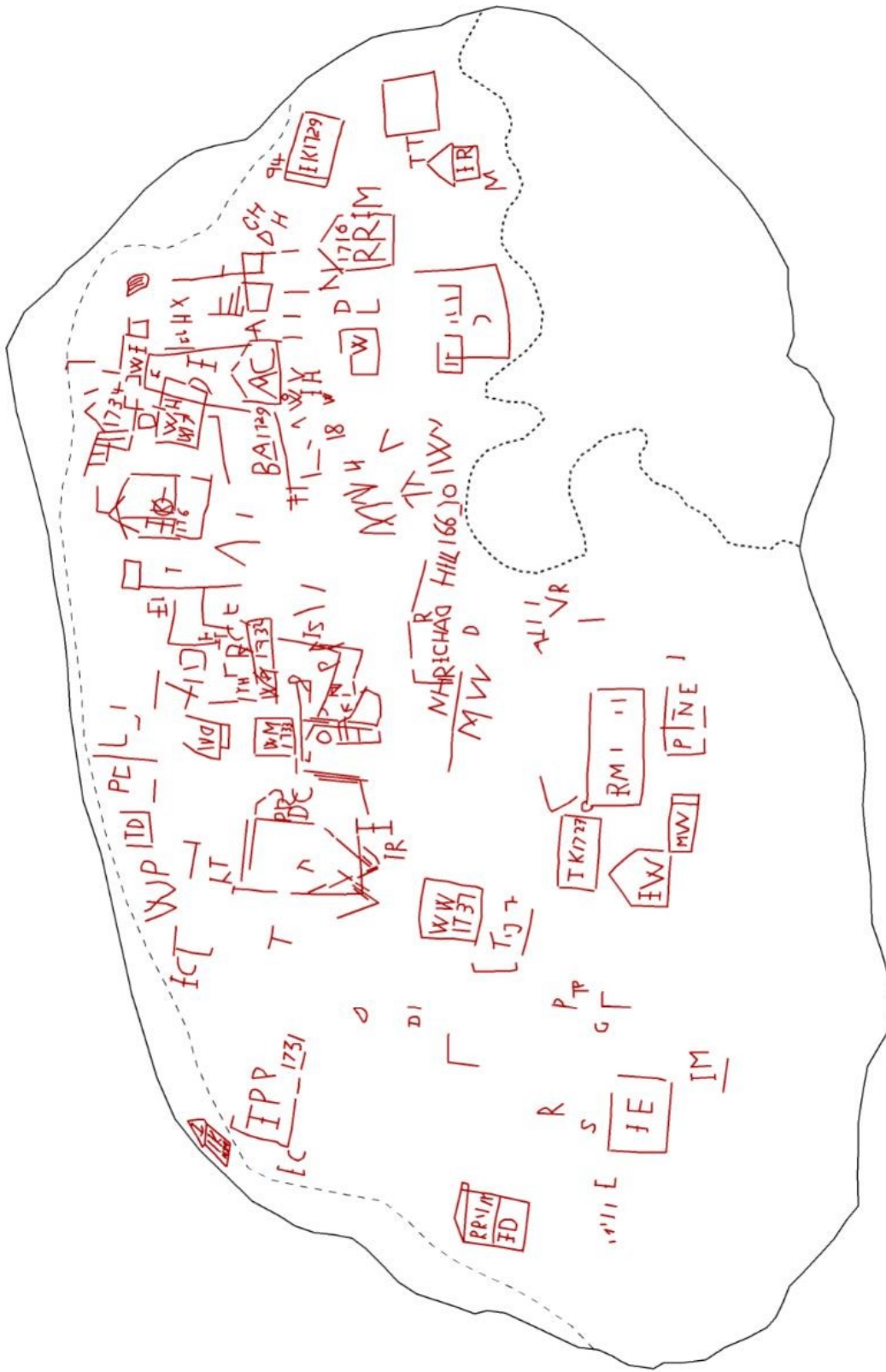
The techniques employed at CBN 1 were also used at Kingman's Cove on the south side of Fermeuse Harbour. A large glacial erratic situated on an elevated slope 300m south of the water's edge was first brought to the attention of Dr. Peter Pope in 1986, and again in 2002 with the assistance of local residents (Pope 2003:14). At the time of Pope's recording, many historic inscriptions were visible on the south and east faces of the rock, and their ap-

proximate spatial relationships noted. Revisiting the site some 16 years later, our first tasks involved the acquisition of more accurate GPS co-ordinates and the cutting back of surrounding overgrowth to facilitate closer inspection, photogrammetry and H-RTI.

The surface model produced of the south face of the boulder shows the precise placement, size and even stratigraphic relationships between dozens of different inscriptions, thus providing a much more detailed and accurate representation (Figure 3). Consider, for example, the 'Marshall Hill' inscription first recorded in 2002. Photogrammetry revealed not only that the name was Richard Hill (not Marshall Hill) but also that the spelling of the given name was corrected with the subsequent addition of a second 'R' between, and slightly above, the letters A and D.

H-RTI on selected areas of the inscription-strewn boulder produced evidence for carefully rendered carvings such as the 1684 IK petroglyph first sketched in 2002. The anchor at the top of the inscription is a nautical theme clearly in fitting with the maritime economy and lifeways of early modern Newfoundland (Figure 4). This particular example — as well as other house-like glyphs containing initials and dates spanning into the latter decades of the 18th century — are of interest for their close similarities to church graffiti recorded in various parts of England, and cautiously interpreted by graffiti scholar Matthew Champion as memorials to the dead (Champion 2015:202-203). Given the secular location and context of the Kingman's Cove inscriptions, an alternative interpretation can be proposed.

Perhaps these carefully-bounded and dated inscriptions can be viewed as a form of place making, whereby this prominent rock feature is transformed into a communal monument. The key to understanding this idea lay in the fact that the Kingman's Cove rock is situated along an old historic footpath between the communities of Fermeuse and Renew's. As a waypoint or 'half-way rock', this glacial erratic is where settlers and seasonal visitors alike may have stopped for a rest, and sometimes marked their presence/passage before traversing the rest of the distance for the purposes of business or pleasure. In 1666 Plymouth surgeon James Yonge described his weekly journey from Renew's to Fermeuse, possibly using the very same footpath (though no mention is made to the Kingman's Cove boulder): "Every week I



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went over once, and my companion once. The walk was through the woods and two marshes. I used to leave a bottle of brandy hid behind a tree, which I would mark, and take a dram on my way” (in Poynter 1963:56).

The final site discussed in this report is in Brigus South, 16km north of Fermeuse. The historic petroglyph is accessible via a footpath roughly 1km south of the modern community and is carved atop a shale outcrop jutting out into the water. Just like the other two sites, local residents informed us of the inscriptions. A quick visual inspection immediately draws your attention to the name Michael Gregory, the place name Brigus South, the date April 3rd 1879, a partially preserved two-masted ship, and the word Devon (Figure 5). The small size and near horizontal orientation of these inscriptions allowed for a relatively straightforward recording compared to that of the other two sites.

H-RTI revealed additional faint inscriptions, dates and even a small hare/rabbit in the right corner of the panel (Figure 6), suggesting at least two different episodes of carving starting with the Michael Gregory inscription, followed by the two-masted Brigantine and 1884 date. The relationship between the Michael Gregory inscription and that of the hare and Devon place name, however, are still unclear.

Records from the 19th and early 20th century list several Brigus South residents named Michael

Gregory: one is listed as a fisherman in 1870, another recorded as having died at 22 years of age in 1887, and a third enumerated in 1921 as a head of household. That this third Michael Gregory and the one who carved his name on the rock are one and the same can be clearly demonstrated by the fact that the

1921 census also lists his date of birth (born 1861) and his month of birth (April). From these details, we can connect the historic inscription to 18-year-old Michael Gregory, who may (or may not) have been born in Devon, but who certainly made his mark on this rock outcrop on April 3rd almost 140 years ago.

Despite its relatively recent age, the Brigus South inscriptions also bore the most evidence of spalling damage due to freeze/thaw action of the three sites investigated. Therefore, an additional recording method was brought to bear in the form of a silicone cast. This involved the application of a release agent and the construction of a barrier wall using potters clay around the area of the inscription to contain the poured silicone rubber. After sixteen hours of cure time at 20° Celsius, the finished product produced similarly detailed results to that of H-RTI, but with the added bonus that this

silicone cast will be donated to the Brigus South Heritage Society for display next summer.

To conclude, we hope that the results of this ongoing research will serve as a springboard for the further examination of historic graffiti and parietal art



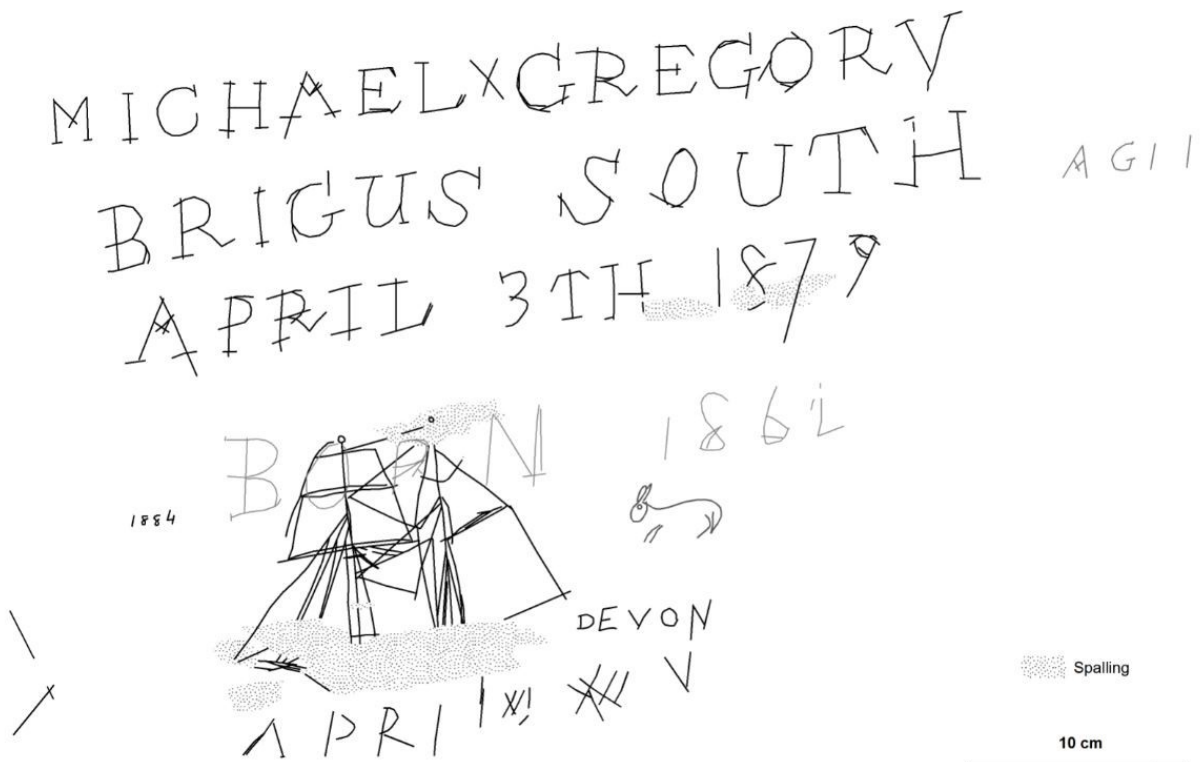
Figure 4: ‘IK 1684’ inscription artificially lit using the H-RTI technique (top) and line drawing interpretation (bottom) Image credit: Bryn Tapper





Figure 5: Photograph of Brigus South inscriptions. Photo credit: Barry Gaulton

Figure 6: Line drawing interpretation of the Brigus South inscriptions following photogrammetric and H-RTI analysis.
Image credit: Bryn Tapper.



throughout Newfoundland and Labrador, as well as an example of how techniques such as photogrammetry and H-RTI can greatly assist in both analysis and interpretation.

Acknowledgments

First and foremost we would like to thank the Provincial Archaeology Office, Department of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation for supporting this nascent project. The unnamed resident of Conception Bay North (you know who you are!) and Ian Gillies from Brigus South also deserve special thanks for bringing these sites to our attention. We would like to acknowledge the previous work of Dr. Peter Pope, who conducted a preliminary survey and recording of several sites in Fermeuse Harbour including that of Kingman's Cove. Finally, Joshua Forth, a Sanford Flemming College Cultural Heritage Conservation and Management Intern, assisted with all stages of the silicone casting of the Brigus South inscriptions for which we are very grateful.

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