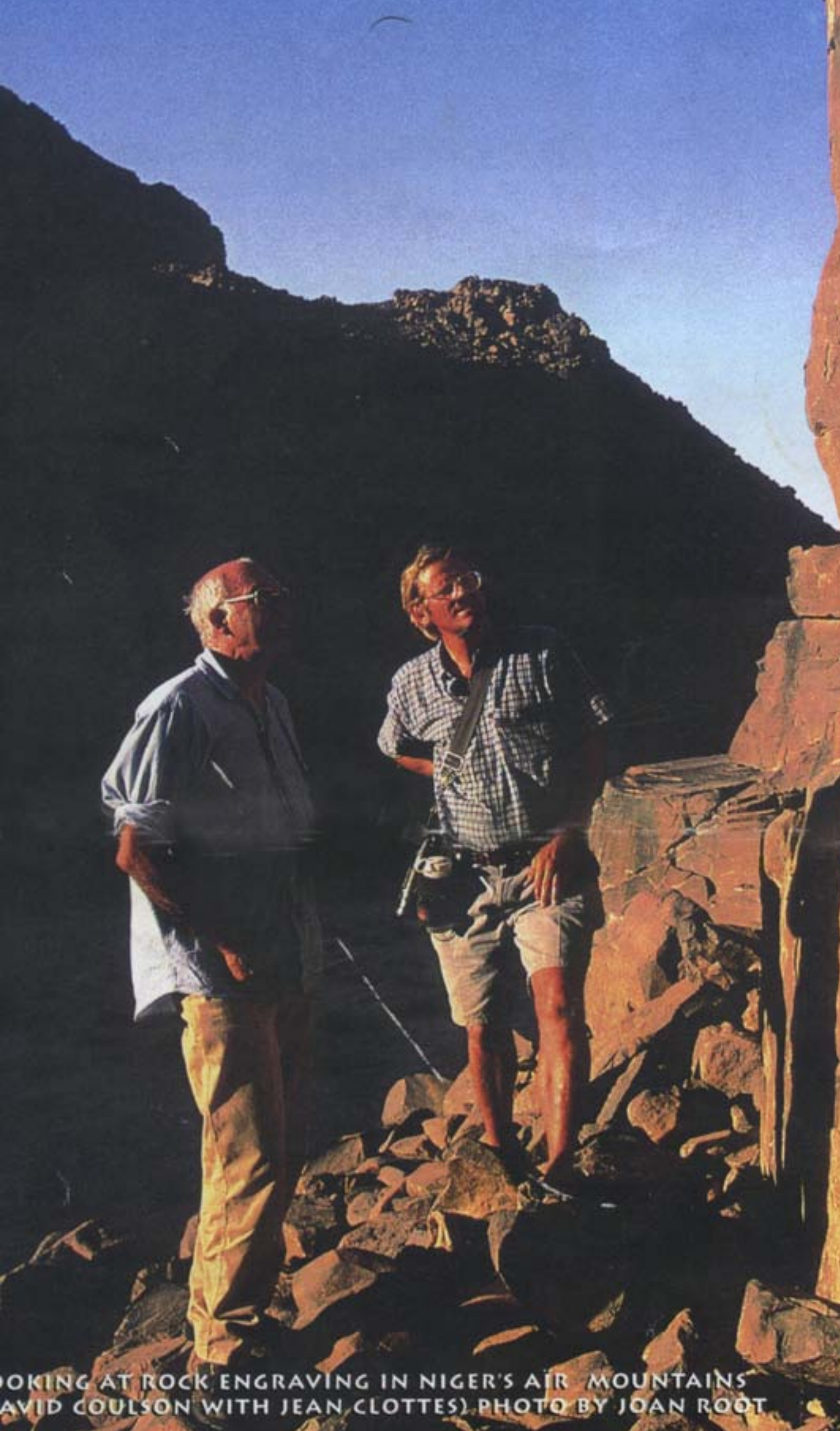




TARA

NEWSLETTER

AUTUMN 2000



LOOKING AT ROCK ENGRAVING IN NIGER'S AIR MOUNTAINS (DAVID COULSON WITH JEAN CLOTTES) PHOTO BY JOAN ROOT

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# INTRODUCTION

The Mission of TARA, Trust for African Rock Art, is to survey the current status of rock art throughout the continent; to determine representative examples of the art's state of general preservation, security and future conservation needs; to create a global awareness of its cultural importance, diversity and fragility; and to protect and preserve the most important and threatened sites for the benefit of future generations.

TARA's Founding Patrons were the late Dr. Mary Leakey and Sir Laurens van der Post. The idea of TARA originated from a discussion between Mary Leakey and David Coulson in 1997. Mary was concerned about the way in which the rock paintings in Tanzania, some of which may be several thousand years old, were being damaged by graffiti and vandalism. She had a special interest in the paintings which she and her husband Louis had studied in the 1950's.

The Trust provides a forum for:

- (a) Raising funds for the above mentioned aims and activities
- (b) Assisting interested groups and individuals to preserve endangered paintings and engravings
- (c) Surveying little known or previously unrecorded sites

The Board of Directors and Honorary Trustees are chosen for their knowledge of the art and dedication to its conservation through:

- (a) Research
- (b) Public awareness campaigns
- (c) Promotion of conservation measures



## SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES SINCE NOVEMBER 1998

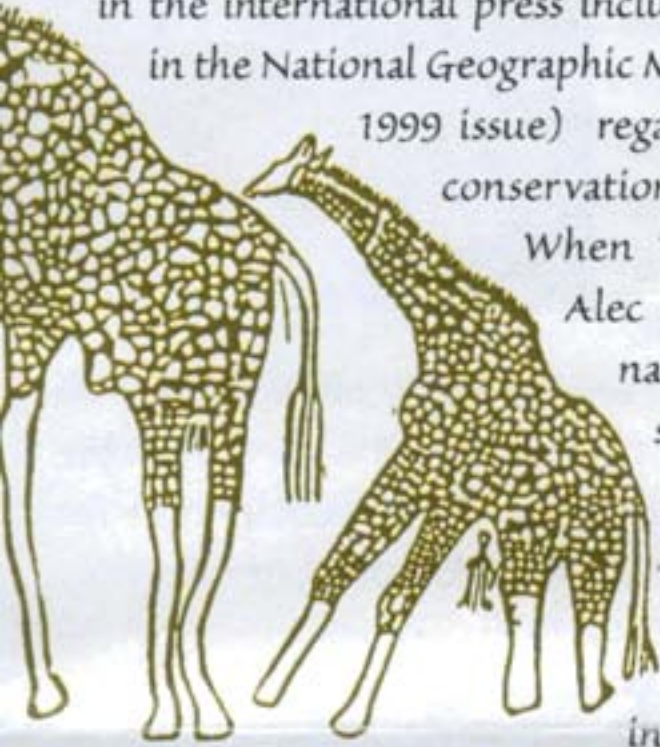
TARA is pleased to report that since the last Newsletter much has been achieved on several different fronts. At the end of 1998 into early 1999 TARA was involved in moulding the big Sahara giraffes which they had recorded in 1997 and reported in Newsletter No. 2. In January, 1999 David Coulson and Alec Campbell delivered their book on African Rock Art to the publishers in New York, but owing to "design hold-ups" this will now not be published until Spring 2001. In April, 1999 Coulson gave a lecture on Saharan rock art at the Royal Geographical Society in London and later, in June, a similar lecture to the National Geographic Society in Washington D.C., U.S.A. In August, 1999 Coulson and Campbell attended a rock art Conservation and Management conference in Zimbabwe, organised by SARAP, Southern African Rock Art Project. In September the World Monument Fund in New York announced the listing of the Dabous Giraffe site (Niger) on their 2000 Watchlist of the World's 100 Most

Endangered Sites. Meanwhile, on a broader strategic level, TARA has initiated a Planning Review, whereby Board Members are now talking to rock art specialists in Africa and elsewhere, as well as to relevant Foundations and Institutions, to try and determine how TARA can most effectively carry out its stated mission. At the same time TARA hopes to try and identify/qualify other organisations and individuals who might be most helpful as collaborators in a shared vision. To this end David Coulson and Alec Campbell recently travelled to South Africa to talk to TARA's South African Trustees and other rock art specialists. Coulson has also recently travelled to Europe and the USA to visit other Trustees and specialists as well as potential donors. In the meantime TARA wishes to acknowledge the financial support of the Robert H and Ann Lurie Foundation and the National Geographic Society, as well as the following individual donors, Edward Roski Jnr., Suzanne Georges and Thomas Hill.

# DABOVS GIRAFFES SITE, NIGER (SAHARA)

## MOULDING PROJECT (1999)

In TARA's second Newsletter it was reported that David Coulson and Alec Campbell had recorded two life size giraffe engravings in the Sahara in November '97 and that they would be returning to the site early in 1999. Since then a number of articles have appeared in the international press including a recent article in the National Geographic Magazine (September, 1999 issue) regarding TARA's giraffe conservation project.

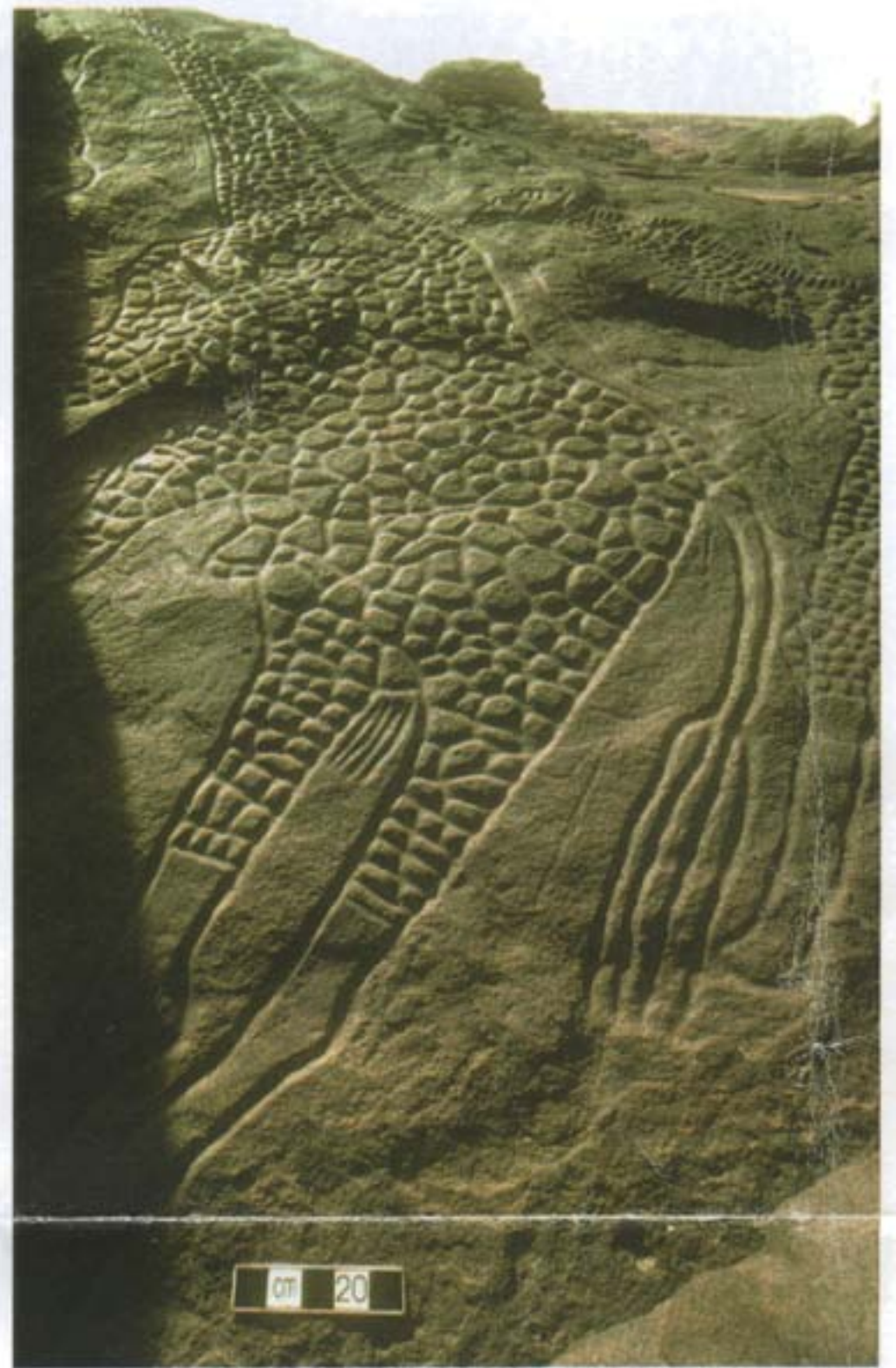


When David Coulson and Alec Campbell had originally visited the giraffe site in 1997 they were amazed by the quality of the engravings which are located on an inclined slab at the top

of a sandstone outcrop not far from the Aïr Mountains. They were however alarmed at their apparent vulnerability, especially to visitors walking over them. At that time they noted the proximity of the site to a tar road and understood from the local Tuareg that people were beginning to visit the site. What was worse was the discovery that the biggest giraffe had already been damaged in this way. The sandstone was breaking up and one section was loose and would soon be destroyed.

During the ensuing discussions Dr. Jean Clottes, who was accompanying the expedition as a guest of TARA suggested that a mould might be taken of the two giraffe. This would enable replicas (casts) to be made thus preserving the memory of them for future generations should they ever become damaged or degraded.

Recognising the importance of Jean Clottes' proposal TARA contacted the Government of Niger and started looking for sponsorship; meanwhile Jean Clottes discussed the proposal with UNESCO and approached



Les Nouveaux Ateliers Merindol of Avignon, a company which had worked in the Palaeolithic Caves of France. In November 1998 David Coulson, together with Pierre Merindol, went to Niger and held discussions with the Minister of Tourism, and the Prefet of Agadez, equivalent to the Governor of Northern Niger. Merindol made a careful examination of the engravings, stabilised crumbling areas, and tested, on bare rock, four different moulding techniques.

In January 1999 Coulson returned to the site with Merindol, having previously shipped out the moulding materials to the site. Clottes and Campbell accompanied them. Over a two-week period a mould of the whole ensemble was successfully made and the story was covered by Coulson for the National Geographic Magazine (September 1999 issue). Meanwhile the full scientific story was written up by Clottes, Coulson and Campbell and published in INORA (Issue No. 23), the Newsletter of the International Committee of Rock Art and ICOMOS.

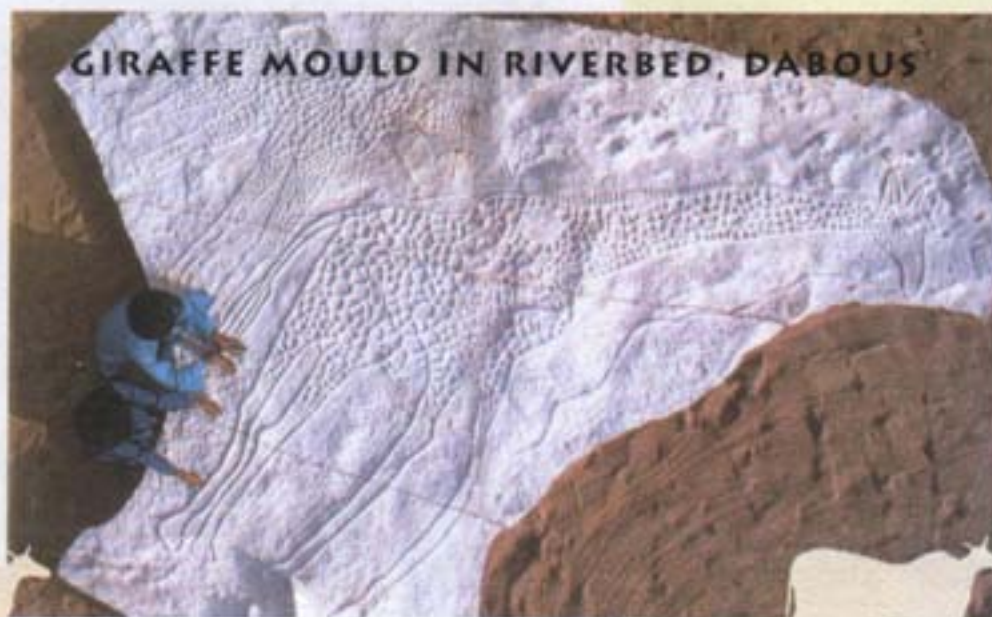


GUARD, DABOVS

## SAHARA VISITS BY TRUSTEES, FEBRUARY 1999 (AT THE END OF THE MOULDING PROJECT)

In early February, 1999, towards the end of the moulding project, the principals of the Bradshaw Foundation who financed the bulk of this project visited the site. This group included Robert Hefner III (President) with his daughter Cathy, Damon de Laszlo (Chairman), and John Robinson (Foundation Controller) with his son Peter. Their arrival coincided with the arrival of a group of official dignitaries whom TARA had invited to a small ceremony. These dignitaries included Niger's Minister of the Environment and Water Affairs, the Minister of Tourism and Handcrafts (Artisinat) and the regional Governor (Prefet) of Agadez. A group of Tuareg nomads on camels performed for the officials to the accompaniment of drums and chanting women. After a night in camp David Coulson and Alec Campbell took the Bradshaw Foundation group on a short orientation trip into the Aïr Mountains and the Ténéré. Together they visited other engraving sites and a prehistoric site out in the Ténéré, an ancient river valley visible from space and now full of sand.

Finally, to celebrate the successful completion of the project, TARA's principal benefactor, Ann Lurie and TARA Board Member, Tom Hill flew in to Agadez and visited the giraffe site. They were welcomed by a group of Tuareg nomads who performed an evening "tam-tam" (dance) in their honour. The next day, in order to show Ann and Tom other sites and to give them a better idea of the region, Alec Campbell, David Coulson and Sidi Mohamed Illies, TARA's Tuareg operator, took them on a 5 day trip through the Aïr Mountains and on into the Ténéré Sand Sea where they camped in the Blue Mountains. In addition to the other rock engravings they were also able to visit some important prehistoric sites.



GIRAFFE MOULD IN RIVERBED, DABOUS



## DOCUMENTATION TRIPS

### ETHIOPIA VISIT (NOVEMBER, 1999)

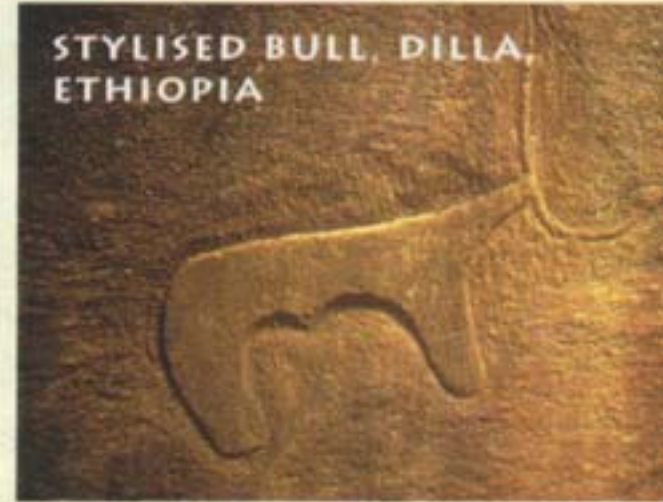
In November 1999 David Coulson and Alec Campbell visited southern Ethiopia in order to preview the ground and survey some of the rock engraving sites in the southern region.

Their idea was to use this trip to learn about where they should later concentrate on recording and to assess the political situation.

They also wanted to see how easy or not it will be to work in Ethiopia, make contact with the people who know the rock art areas and generally plan for the future. During the first part of their trip they focused on the Rift Valley (lake) area west of the Bale Mountains and specifically on several cattle engraving sites in the Dilla area south of Awasa. Some of these sites had already been recorded and published (scientifically), first by French archaeologist Francis Anfray and later by another archaeologist, Roger Joussaume. The main site here consists of over 70 stylised engravings of bulls and cows on both sides of a small gorge east of Dilla in open bush country. Each animal measures about 18 inches in length, all extraordinarily finely done, using a bas relief technique, so that they appear to stand out from the rock face. All animals have long thin horns. Some bulls have a strange triangular object attached to one horn. All cows have large exaggerated udders. In one place part of the cliff face has collapsed into the stream, but the engravings are still visible underneath, although upside down.

While in the area Coulson and Campbell also surveyed two other sites south east of Dilla with very similar engravings except that these were in a forested area on the eastern slopes of the Rift Valley. In

STYLISTED BULL, DILLA,  
ETHIOPIA



both cases the engravings were on small rock faces next to streams. They were taken to these sites by an Ethiopian student researcher, Gizachew Abegaz. Since their visit Gizachew has informed them that he has found two other similar sites, previously unrecorded. In addition to surveying the cattle engravings they also visited a number of Monolithic rock carving sites, the first of which, Tutu Fella, had been partly excavated by Roger Joussaume. This consisted of some 300 anthropomorphic monoliths (stelae) at the top of a high hill. Many of the stelae bear carved human faces, a few of them being very finely carved. Most of the stelae are 3 - 4 feet high and some have traces of red and black pigment on them. Three or four of the stelae were over 6 feet high. On the basis of six excavations, Joussaume has estimated a total of 600 skeletons here (all adults) given that each grave was immediately adjacent to a stele. He thinks pottery excavated in the graves dates with the skeletons, but an association between the stelae and the skeletons is less easy to determine. The stelae could be much older. Further south we were taken to another site, Tutiti, where over 800 fallen stelae have been counted so far and all of these are phallic carvings. Most of these Monoliths are about 6 - 7 feet high/long, but one is about 15 feet (5 metres) high. A few appear to have been re-erected. The stone and perhaps the stelae themselves appear to have been imported. Some of the bigger ones must weigh several tons.

Further west, on the other side of the Rift Valley, Coulson and Campbell visited a number of other phallic monolith sites in the Soddo region, where some stelae are thought to date from the 3rd Millennium B.C. They also recorded two important rock engraving sites. One was a cave site with the back wall covered with vertical and horizontal grooves, amongst which are a few clear geometrics and a single 'bas-relief' bovine. Their guide, Zebdewos Chemma, told them that the site was used as recently as about 50 years ago to pray for rain; it may still be used for this purpose today. The other site, Borossa, consisted of a number of exposed but partly buried rocks on an open hillside bearing large geometric designs quite deeply etched. Based on other similar engravings they have seen further north, they believe that these latter engravings could well predate pastoralism in this region, which would make them

over 5000 years old. Someone at Borossa is engaged in crushing stone and Coulson and Campbell are fearful that some engraved boulders are currently being destroyed. They reported this fact to Roger Joussaume. During the final part of their trip they drove to Tiya, about 100 kilometres south of Addis to see the carved megaliths for which this area is famous. There are hundreds of these megaliths spread over a large area, which appear to be tombstones. Some megaliths are anthropomorphic while others have swords and symbols carved on the front. The megaliths are thought to be between 700 and 900 years old and to date from the Christian era. The initial archaeology here was done by Francis Anfray, but Joussaume has also published a large illustrated book about these megaliths. By chance he was staying at the Tiya "hotel" when Coulson and Campbell arrived, so they had an opportunity to talk to him about the local archaeology. Just outside the village of Tiya is a protected "cemetery" with 42 megaliths and a fence and guard. Some of these megaliths were brought in from distant locations to add to an existing concentration which could serve as an outdoor museum.

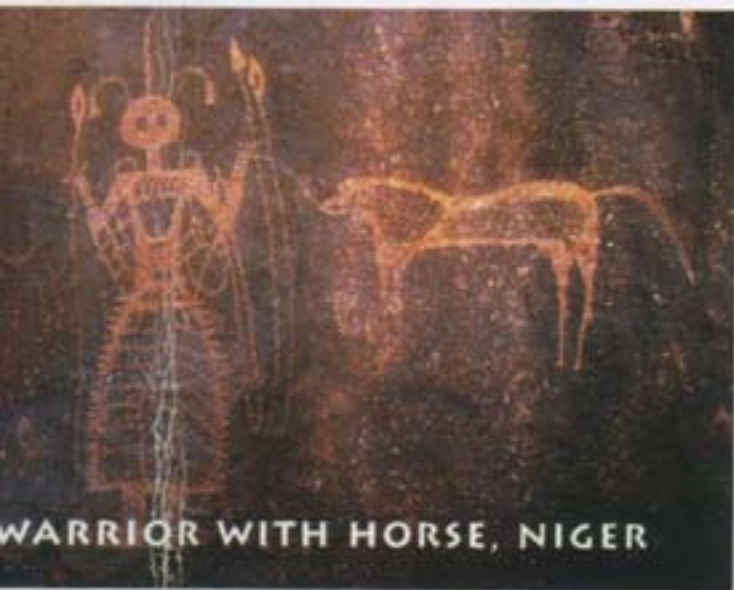
TARA hopes to organise another trip to Ethiopia, perhaps in 2001, to survey some of the rock painting sites in the Dire Dawa region.



STYLISTED CATTLE ENGRAVING, ETHIOPIA

## **NIGER TRIP (SAHARA) FEBRUARY, 2000**

In February 2000 David Coulson and Alec Campbell travelled to Niamey for meetings with the Minister of Tourism and Handcrafts, Rhissa Ag Boula, and the new U.S. Ambassador to Niger, Barbro Owens-Kirkpatrick. These meetings centred on the Dabous



**WARRIOR WITH HORSE, NIGER**

giraffe conservation project and on possible U.S. Embassy input into rock art conservation in the Aïr Mountains region. They revisited the Dabous site with Ritchie Miller, Communications Officer at the U.S. Embassy and with Sidi Mohamed Ilies, a Tuareg entrepreneur and tour operator based in Agadez. Since the moulding of the big giraffe in 1999 Sidi has been acting as TARA's unofficial co-ordinator, assisting TARA with the supervision of custodians, well-digging and the planning of rock art tourism and conservation in the region. At the beginning of 1999 TARA hired two custodians to guard the site, dug a well to provide water for them a few kilometres from the site and provided them with a record book in which visitors supply their details. This is the start of a programme which will be expanded. They noted that since their 1999 visit, nearly 400 tourists from fifteen different countries had visited the giraffe site, with numbers increasing, making the placement of custodians a very worthwhile and critical exercise. A sign had been erected and the site was in good order.

They later travelled with Sidi for 5 days in the eastern Aïr, visiting a remarkable stone circle about 100 ft. in diameter in the Ténéré (see photo page 12) and surveying new engraving sites in the region. This circle has mystified a number of archaeologists and an article on it was published in the 1998 issue of Sahara. Since this recent trip Coulson has learnt that the mystery has now at last been solved. The circle appears to have been part of a French military landing strip from the 1930's. Sidi also took them to see the semi-fossilised remains of an

giraffe conservation project and on possible U.S. Embassy input into rock art conservation in the Aïr Mountains region.

They revisited the Dabous site

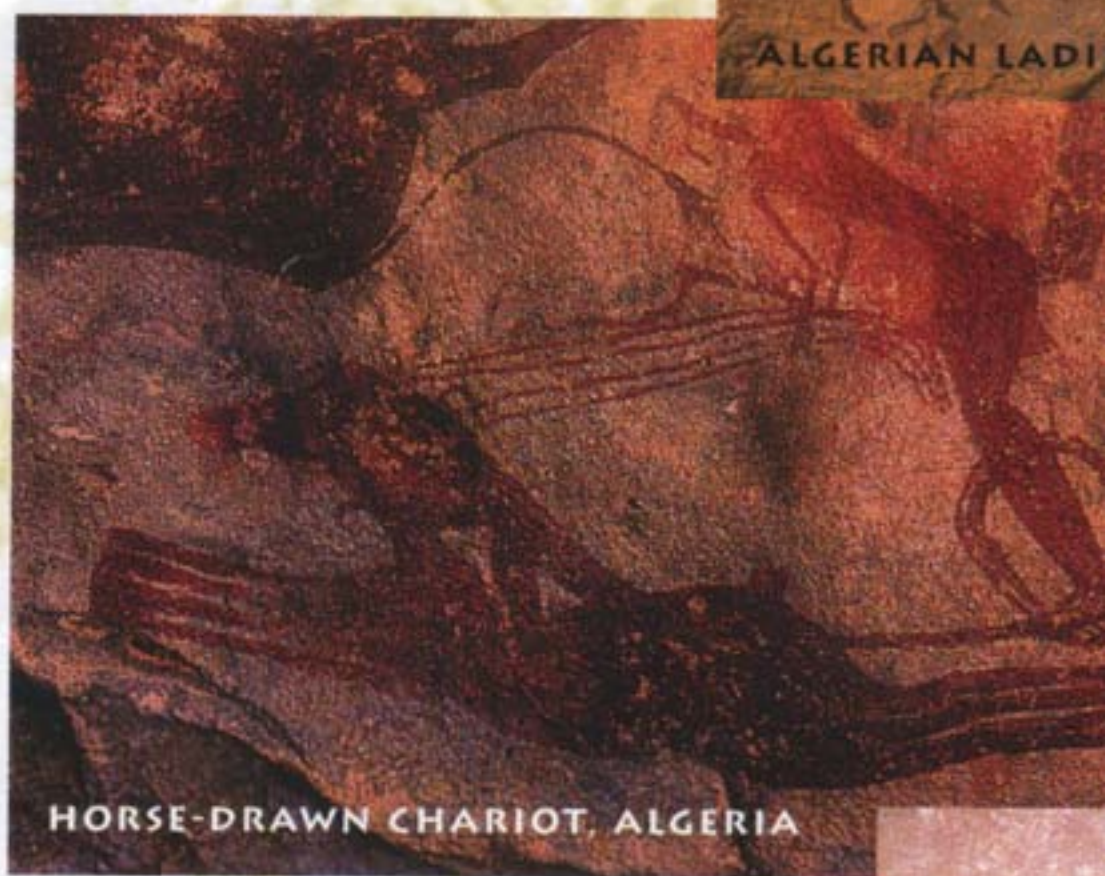
"aurochs" (prehistoric ox, now extinct) in the dunes, apparently around 15000 years old. During this period they were able to discuss possible tourist circuits (rock art safaris) with Sidi as well as tourist literature, sites requiring protection, training of custodians and tour operators and possible U.S. Peace Corps involvement in the Aïr project. Since the end of the Tuareg Rebellion the IUCN (International Union for the Conservation of Nature) has been active in this area initiating several conservation programmes.

## **ALGERIA TRIP (SAHARA) FEBRUARY, 2000**

From Agadez (Niger) David Coulson and Alec Campbell drove north into southern Algeria with another Tuareg operator, Mellakh Cheikh, who is based in Tamanrasset in southern Algeria. They had previously travelled with Cheikh in Niger and Algeria on their first Saharan trip. The main purpose of this journey was to record engravings in the Oued Djerat, in the



**ALGERIAN LADIES**



**HORSE-DRAWN CHARIOT, ALGERIA**

northern Tassili-n-Ajjer, specifically some very large giraffe engravings reported by French Archaeologist, Henri Lhote in the 1950's. They travelled east through several mountain ranges, including the Hoggar mountains where they reached a height of 9000 feet. In the western Tassili they stopped to visit a painting site in

**AVIMOR  
ZIMBABWE**

the Tassili de Tasedjebest with remarkably preserved polychrome paintings from the late pastoral and horse periods (perhaps 4000 to 2000 BP), including several amazing depictions of horse-drawn chariots and people dressed in stylish clothing. The site is located not far from the village of Tamadjert and the need for a custodian here was noted. In the same region they visited two similar painting sites in the Tassili d'Afara where many wonderful paintings had been destroyed or covered by graffiti. On arrival at the entrance to the Oued (Wadi) Djerat in the northern Tassili they were met by the camels on which they would ride south up the wadi. The valley is not passable by a 4 x 4 vehicle. So, during the next week they walked and rode for some 30 kilometres up this gorge surveying many remarkable engravings.

Perhaps most remarkable of all was the giraffe panel reported by Lhote. This consists of a herd of some 16 overlapping giraffes, moving left to right, and a lion apparently stalking them. Coulson and Campbell measured the biggest giraffe at 8.5 metres (27 feet) head to foot which may well make this the largest prehistoric animal engraving ever recorded. The whole panel measures over 700 square feet and is extremely difficult to photograph as the etching is fairly shallow. In addition to this several large elephant and rhino were recorded, several bubalus (prehistoric buffalo), some life-size and larger than life-size human figures and a huge lion with open jaws, perhaps 4 metres long. Many of these engravings seemed to be from the Early Hunter period (8000 - 12000 B.P.) while others appeared to be from the early Pastoral Period. Coulson and Campbell saw

many fine cattle engravings (bulls), one of which has a finely-executed handprint and 2 footprints superimposed on its chest. They were told stories of other remarkable engravings and painting sites in the region, apparently never recorded, suggesting the need for a

further visit. On their return journey to Niger the two men got caught in a major sand storm.

## CONSERVATION NEWS

### CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT MEETING, ZIMBABWE

In August 1999, at the instigation of the Getty Conservation Institute TARA was invited to attend a Southern African Rock Art Project (SARAP) meeting in Zimbabwe. SARAP came into being in 1998 as an indirect result of a Southern African UNESCO initiative in 1995. This UNESCO initiative was organised to help these countries apply for World Heritage status for their most important monuments and sites. Out of this initiative an awareness then arose that rock art decision makers and managers needed training in the form of workshops to help them fulfil their roles. The SARAP project was developed by the South African National Monuments Council, the National Museums and Monuments of Zimbabwe, the Getty Conservation Institute, and the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM). One of SARAP's primary aims has been the development of a regional strategy for the management and conservation of rock art in southern Africa. During the course of the August 1999 meeting David Coulson and Alec Campbell were invited to make an illustrated presentation on TARA and its work in different parts of Africa and later they met with the organisers to discuss possible future collaboration.

### WORLD MONUMENT FUND LISTING - DABOUS GIRAFFES SITE

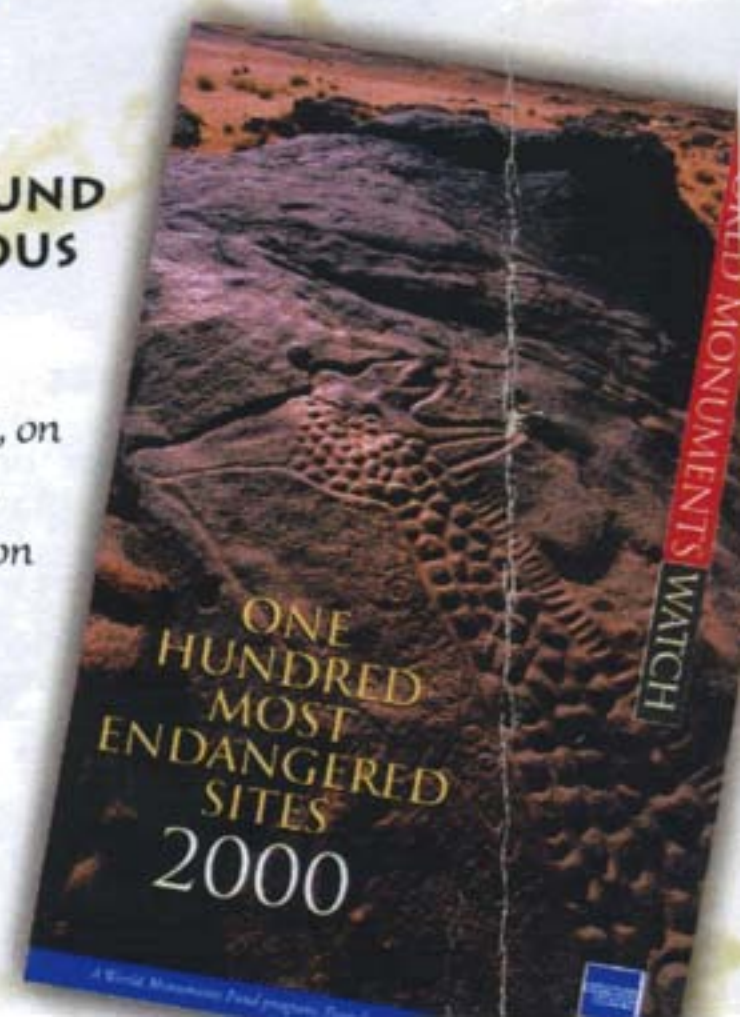
As already mentioned, on September 14th 1999, following an application by TARA, the World Monument Fund (WMF) announced at a New York press conference that the



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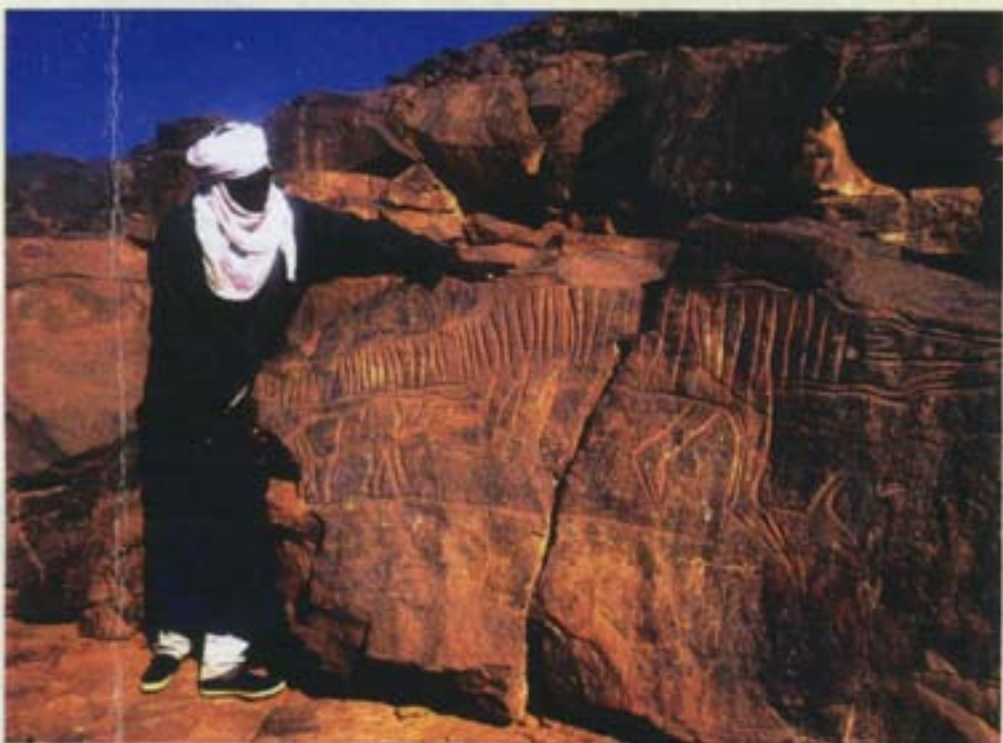
E. MATOPOS



Dabous Giraffe site in Niger was to be included on their 2000 "Watchlist of the Worlds 100 Most Endangered Sites". One of David Coulson's photographs of the giraffe engravings was actually featured on the cover of the Watchlist Catalogue. TARA now hopes to secure funding for the protection of this site and also for a broader community-orientated rock art conservation project in the Aïr mountains region.

## MAJOR OIL DISCOVERY IN LIBYA

Last year TARA heard the news that a British Company, LASMO, which has been working in Libya for some years, had made a major oil discovery under the Messak Sattafet Plateau, one of the richest rock art regions on earth (see photos on opening pages of National Geographic article, June 1999). Recent reports now suggest that several of the regions most famous sites are under serious threat. (Ref. INORA Newsletter Issue No. 23). The latest news is that TARA has been in touch with UNESCO and with the Chief Executive of the Oil Company in London as well as with the Managing Director in Libya. The Libyan government also commissioned UNESCO to carry out a survey but say they



**CROCODILE ENGRAVING, LIBYA**

cannot divulge the findings of the survey team. Meanwhile TARA has been in touch with European rock art experts who have been working in this region for a number of years. The Trust hopes to arrange a meeting with LASMO officials during the course of 2000. As a result of these and other interventions, LASMO has been reviewing its drilling programmes.

## LECTURES

In April 1999 David Coulson gave a lecture to the Royal Geographical Society in London on The Rock Art of the Sahara Desert. June, 1999 he gave another lecture, this time at the National Geographic Society in Washington D.C. entitled "Exploring the Past - African Rock Art". In September, 1999 Coulson gave a talk on African Rock Art at Nairobi's Safari Park Hotel, an evening function organised and hosted by the German Ambassador to Kenya. In December Coulson gave another lecture in the Louis B. Leakey Auditorium at the National Museum in Nairobi. At the beginning of April 2000 he gave a further lecture at the Giraffe Manor, Nairobi, with photographs from his and Alec Campbell's February expedition to south western Algeria.

## DOCUMENTARY FILM



**ON THE WAY TO A SITE IN THE SAHARA**

The work of TARA and David Coulson is the subject of a documentary film currently in development, to be broadcast for television. The film looks at the ancient rock art of Africa, juxtaposing the modern day story of what experts are doing to preserve this art, with a journey back in time to discover how and why early man began to paint and engrave. While we can learn practical aspects about early man's evolution from stones and bones, rock art is virtually the last remaining evidence that can tell us about early humans' imagination and their cultural world.

The film's producers are independent filmmaker Victoria Waldock and Peter Jones of Green Umbrella Films based in Bristol, England. They are currently in discussion with United States, European and British broadcasters, to finalize worldwide distribution of the film.

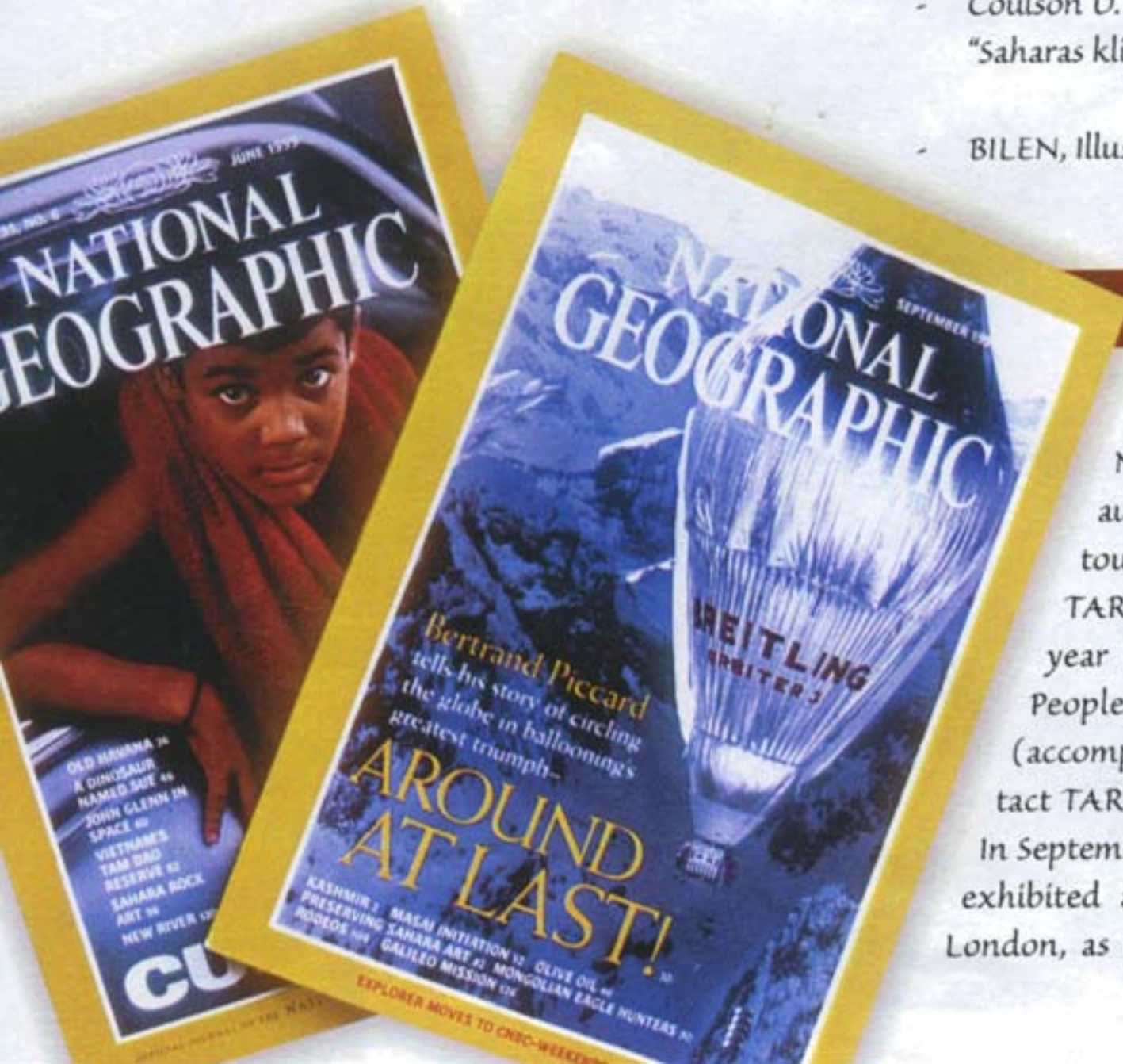
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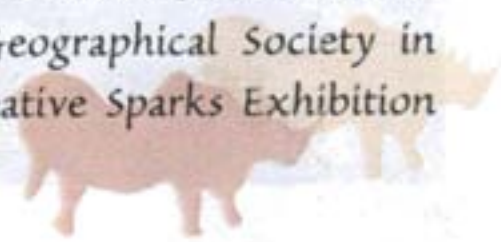
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## FUTURE PLANS

In August, 2000 Coulson plans to visit Namibia in order to meet local rock art authorities and also to meet with local tour operators in order to set up the first TARA rock art safari in Namibia during the year 2001 (probably in early September). People interested in joining a special tour (accompanied by David Coulson) should contact TARA's Nairobi office for more details. In September a cast of the Dabous Giraffes will be exhibited at the Royal Geographical Society in London, as part of the Creative Sparks Exhibition



being organised by the British Association. Several museums including the Natural History Museum and Science Museum are participating in this exhibition.

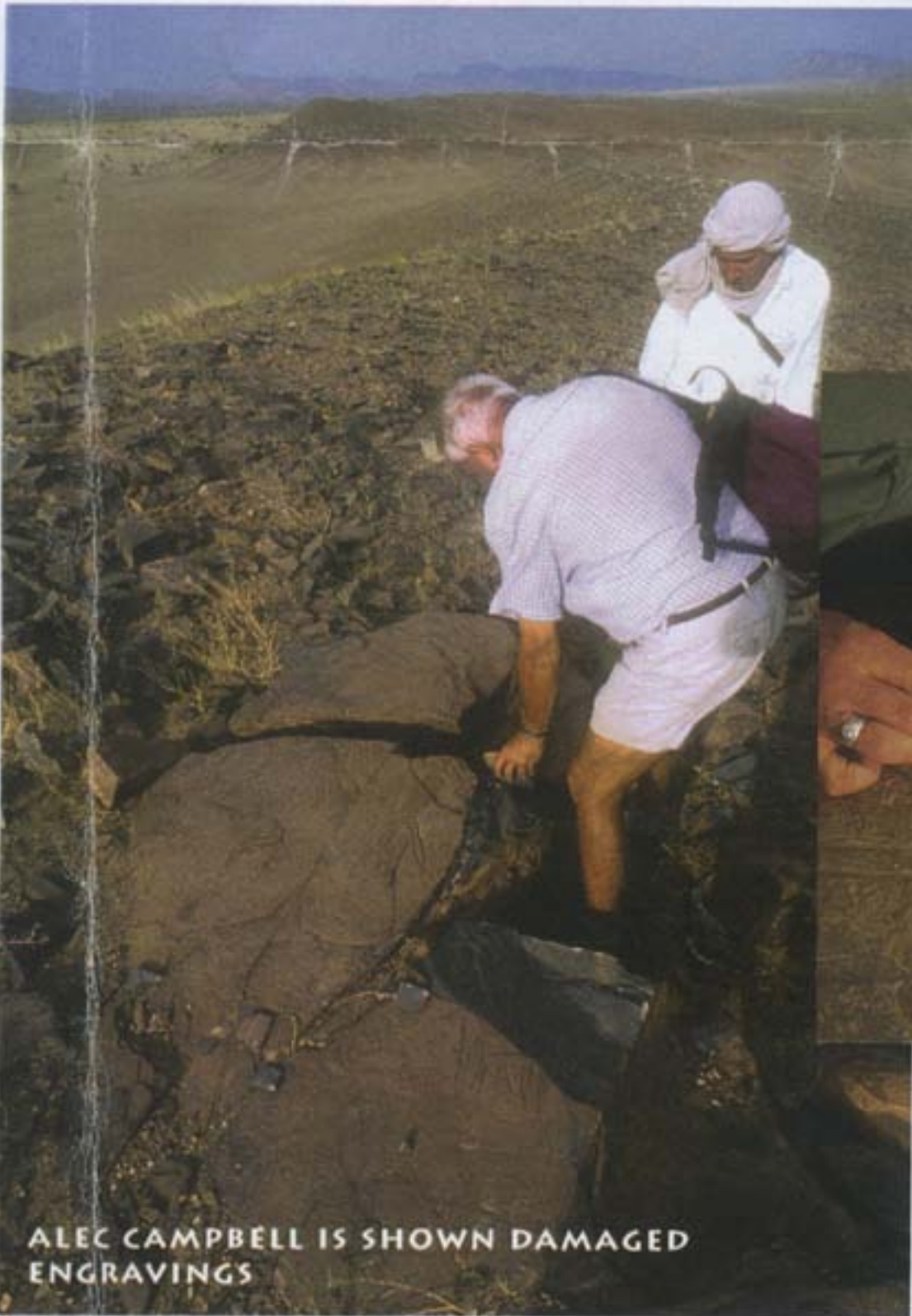
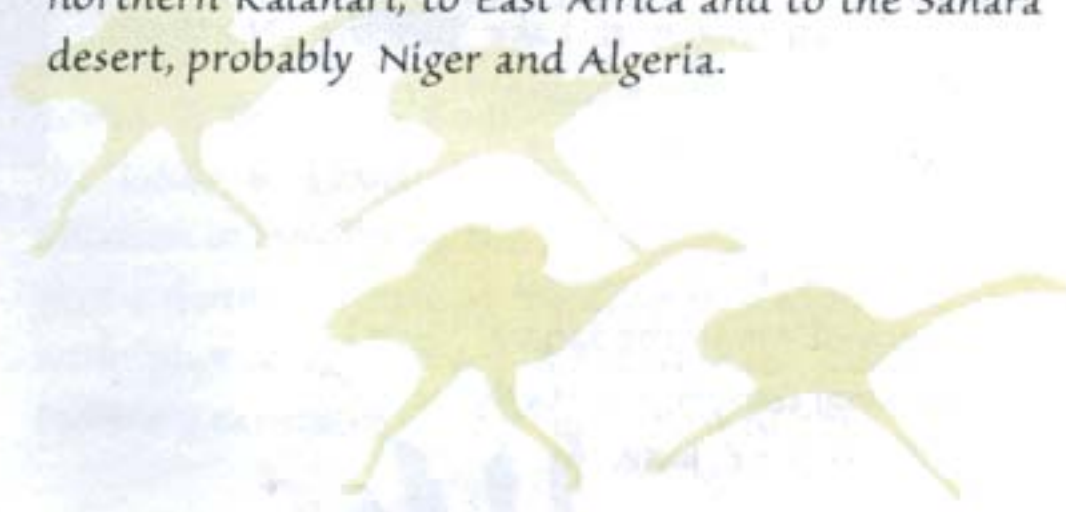
In September/October, 2000 David Coulson, Alec Campbell and Jean Clottes plan to travel to Niger in order to present a cast of the big giraffes to the Niger authorities and Tuareg community leaders, if the cast can be delivered in time. However, owing to security problems in the port of Togo it may not be possible to deliver the cast in time for this deadline.

In November/December 2000, as part of TARA's ongoing survey programme in the Sahara, David Coulson and Alec Campbell plan to travel to Egypt's Gilf Kebir at the Jebel Uweinat region in order to survey important but little known sites there.

During the course of 2000 and 2001 Jean Clottes, Alec Campbell and David Coulson will be working on an illustrated book on the Dabous Giraffe Site, to be published by Le Seuil (France) and Abrams (USA).

This book will also tell the story of the Moulding project and put this site in the context of its wider geographical and archaeological environment.

As already referred to, a television documentary film on African Rock Art and TARA is presently in development, and filming is scheduled to commence in the second half of 2000. It is probable that trips will need to be planned for filming purposes to the northern Kalahari, to East Africa and to the Sahara desert, probably Niger and Algeria.

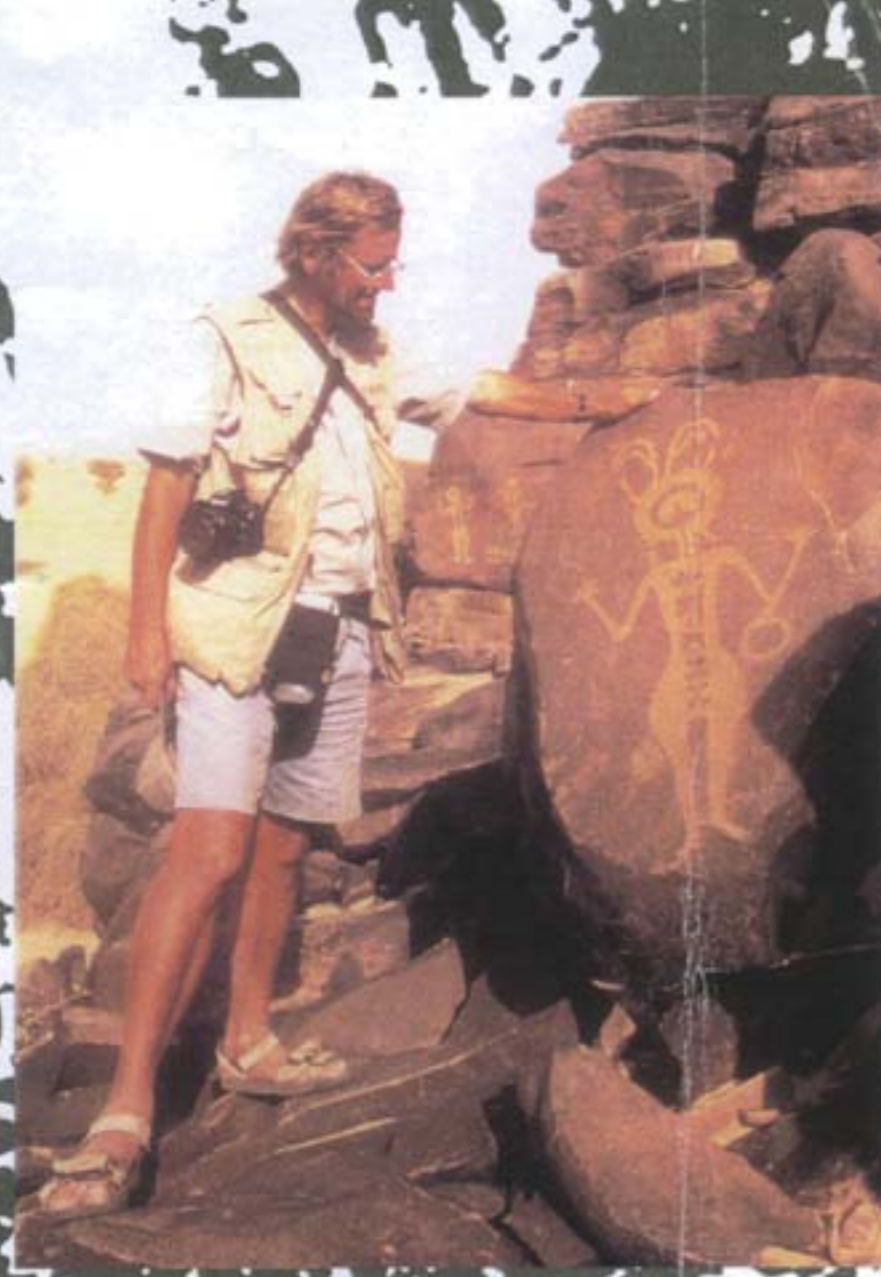


ALEC CAMPBELL IS SHOWN DAMAGED ENGRAVINGS



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

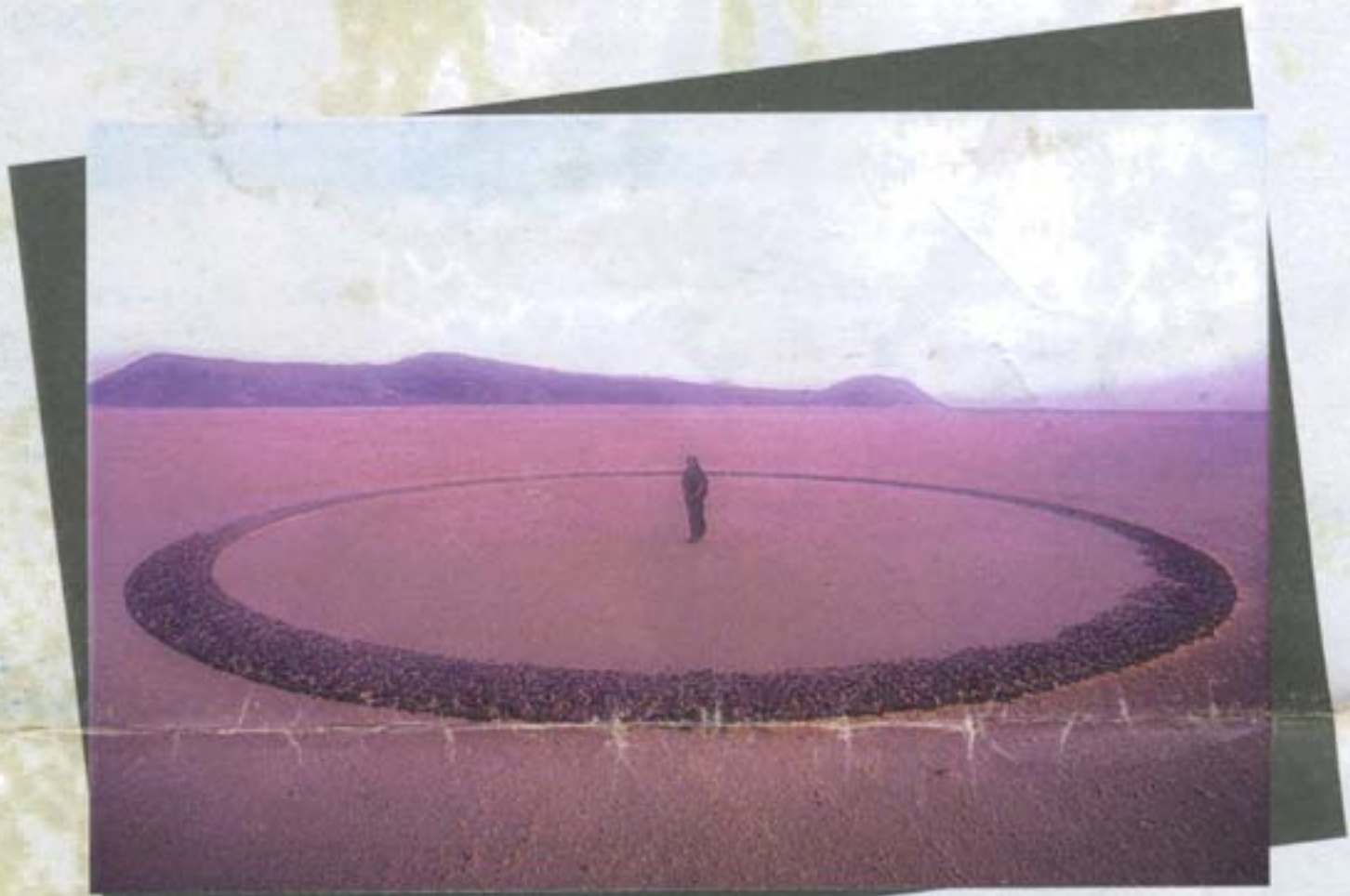
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|----------------------------|---------|
| Malcolm and Anne Badham    | SA      |
| Carol Beckwith             | UK      |
| Janette Deacon             | SA      |
| Angela Fisher              | UK      |
| Dr. Rita Gardner           | UK      |
| Suzanne Georges            | USA     |
| Michael & Stéphanie Gerlts | Kenya   |
| Bernard Huon-Dumentat      | Niger   |
| Roger Joussaume            | France  |
| Margie Keaton              | SA      |
| Ann Lurie                  | USA     |
| Ritchie & Suzette Miller   | Niger   |
| Barbro Owens-Kirkpatrick   | Niger   |
| Abdellah Salih             | Morocco |
| Bruce & Alex Schritzer     | USA     |
| John Selborne              | UK      |
| Jennifer Small             | USA     |
| Jo Ann van Tilburg         | USA     |
| Victoria Waldock           | USA     |
| Susan Welchman             | USA     |
| Nigel and Chanté Waiser    | UK      |



DAVID COULSON WITH AN AIR MOUNTAINS ENGRAVING PHOTOGRAPHED BY TOM HILL



ALEC CAMPBELL AND DAVID COULSON AT AN ENGRAVING SITE IN THE SAHARA (CHAD)



**MYSTERIOUS STONE CIRCLE IN THE TENERE, NIGER  
SEE NIGER TRIP (SAHARA) FEBRUARY 2000**