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W.VA. PETROGLYPHS INDICATE PRESENCE OF IRISH A MILLENIUM AGO

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Summary

On a ridge in southern West Virginia, a Morgantown archaeologist has found evidence that Irish missionaries may have passed through the area a millenium ago.

Archaeologist Robert Pyle met Saturday with representatives of the Irish Embassy, including Daire O'Críodáin, secretary of cultural affairs, to discuss ancient rock carvings called petroglyphs found in a mountain rock shelter near Dingess.

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Archaeologist Robert Pyle met Saturday with representatives of the Irish Embassy, including Daire O'Críodáin, secretary of cultural affairs, to discuss ancient rock carvings called petroglyphs found in a mountain rock shelter near Dingess. "It's really quite commendable for the Embassy of Ireland to be interested in visiting a site in West Virginia," Pyle said.

Pyle said the petroglyphs are similar to ancient markings discovered in a nearby county that indicate the presence of early Irish missionaries known as the Ogam.

"They are very similar. This site in Mingo County is the first site that has two-dimensional markings. They do in fact very much resemble the Ogam alphabet (found at sites in Wales, Scotland and Ireland)," said Pyle, who has been studying Ogam petroglyphs since 1982.

The Mingo County petroglyphs are located on land owned by Marrowbone Development Corp., which plans to preserve the site for future study.

"They're really unique. They have Christian religious symbols that are identifiable, many of them identifiable were recorded very early, as early as the third century in Europe," he said.

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