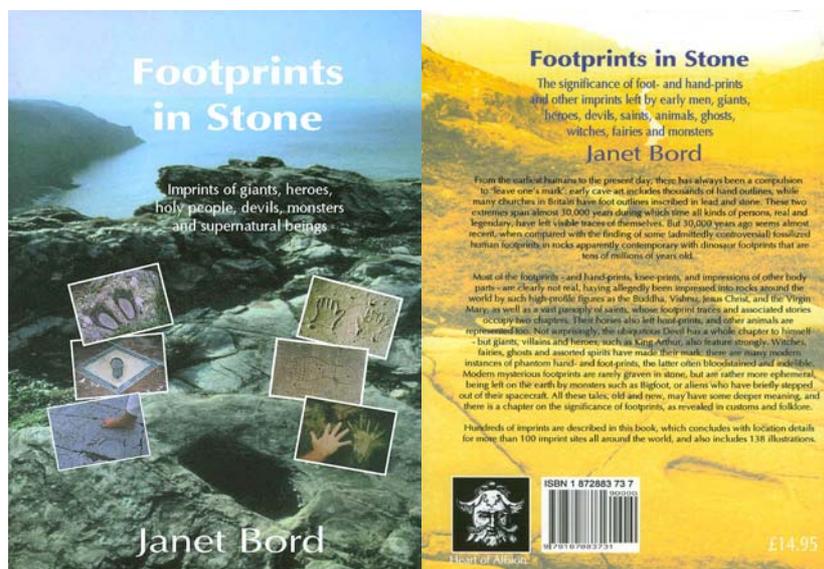


**Bord, J. 2004. Footprints in stone. Imprints of giants, heroes, holy people, devils, monsters and supernatural beings. – Wymeswold, Heart of Albion Press**

Book review by A.J. Veldmeijer



Footprints and tracks are important in archaeology. For example, in Egypt, engraved footprints have been found on the road to Qasr Ibrim (Rose, 1996), the hill top settlement in the far south of Egypt, close to Abu Simbel and recently a book on ancient Egyptian graffiti has been published (Jacquet-Gordon, 2003), presenting predominantly, according to Hagen (2005) “pair[s] footprints engraved into the stone, often accompanied by the titles and name of the owner” but sometimes footprints on their own.

But sets of footprints and other tracks play an even bigger role in palaeontology and the study of these traces of long extinct animals has become an important discipline in its own right, called ‘ichnology’ (only one example of the vast number of papers and books is Lockley & Meyer, 2000).

As an archaeologist I study ancient Egyptian footwear like sandals and shoes and as a palaeontologist, I deal with pterosaurs, which have left us with long and fiercely debated prints. It may not come as a surprise therefore, that I was particularly interested in this book. Archaeological and palaeontological prints are only discussed in passing in chapter two and in that sense the book is a disappointment. However, if you accept this and continue reading, you discover that the book gives a well-written account of the traces of “giants, heroes, holy people, devils, monsters and supernatural beings”, which came to us by means of folktales, myths and religion. The book is divided into ten chapters, of which, as already stated, chapter two deals with prehistoric prints. The first chapter introduces the meaning of hands and feet, supported with examples from present-day practice. Chapter three deals with prints of holy beings such as Buddha and Jesus. The subsequent chapters discuss the traces of saints, animals, the Devil and other bad creatures. Then, the huge prints of giants are discussed followed by chapter nine which deals with supernatural beings, such as ghosts, witches and fairies. In the final chapter (‘Footprint evidence for modern mysteries: monsters and aliens’), the reader is ‘taken back to earth’ and initiated into cryptozoology (the science of ‘hidden’ animals, see for instance Heuvelmans, 1995), hoaxes are also discussed. The author has visited many of the presented prints and at the end of the book, a long list is presented of prints that the reader can see for themselves, as directions are given (with references to the prints in the text by means of chapters). This list is followed by an impressive list of endnotes, together with the index.

The book is of no scientific value to the palaeontologist and only of limited value to the archaeologist working in Egypt. Even for the archaeologist working in the field of archaeology of northwest Europe, as defined at [www.PalArch.nl](http://www.PalArch.nl), it is of limited value. However, it is of much more value to the archaeologist working in the field of Medieval archaeology and later, especially those working in Europe (there is a concentration on Great Britain). Historians, especially those interested in folklore and myths and the like, will find the book much more useful.

However, there are some remarks to be made on the layout. Firstly, there are no references to the pictures. This makes it difficult to read, as one has always to check to see if there is a picture associated with the description. Most of the pictures are without a scale bar. This is, in my opinion, always a huge error, especially when it deals with heroes, giants, angels and the like! The author only used inches. If the book is only intended

for the British market, this is understandable, but in these modern times, 'the other' measuring system, as the most commonly one used, should have also been included. But this is only a minor detail. Finally, not all the photographs are as clear and bright as one would like to see and this is a pity. Nevertheless, the book is a very interesting read, well-researched, well-written and lavishly illustrated and I have really enjoyed reading it!

Bord, J. 2004. Footprints in stone. Imprints of giants, heroes, holy people, devils, monsters and supernatural beings. – Wymeswold, Heart of Albion Press. 263 pp. ISBN 1 872883 73 7. Price £14.95 (paperback).

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