I am twenty years old, and have just finished my first year at the University of Reading studying for a degree in Archaeology and Italian. Having taken part in the compulsory fieldwork at Silchester I also wanted to do something that would aid with both of my subject areas. In 2005 I visited some of the rock art sites of the Val Camonica as a tourist and found them extremely interesting, so when I saw that it was possible to take part in fieldwork there I jumped at the chance. The fieldwork is run by a cooperative called *le Orme dell’Uomo* (The footsteps of Man), and runs for three weeks each summer, of which I attended the second two.

The Val Camonica is not your standard archaeological site. It covers a vast area, and most of the material remains are from the Roman occupation period or later (though this may be due to lack of excavations in the area). (Fossati et al. 1990: 4) However, there is evidence for occupation dating back to the Neolithic, not as material remains, but in the form of art depicted on the rocks that form the U-shaped valley.

The study of Camunian parietal art (art from the Valcamonica region) only began in 1909, with the publication of the discoveries of the *Massi di Cemmo*, two engraved boulders near Capo di Ponte. Following this, and after years of work, the Archaeological Superintendence of Lombardy finally created the National Park at Naquane, again near Capo di Ponte. (Fossati et al 1990:4), where there is a huge range of very interesting figures and engravings including dates, inscriptions in Etruscan alphabet, and a huge range of Iron Age scenes, all protected and presented in situ. No fakes there! The park is also home to several stele, rescued from other, unprotected locations.

The area in which I worked is called Vite, and lies between Capo di Ponte and the village of Paspardo, where we stayed. Rock 96, where I spent most of my time, lies directly above the road, and has been badly damaged not only by encroaching vegetation and lichen, but also by the creation of the cutting for the road.
Working in a small group, consisting of three Italians, one German and myself, we first documented the degradation stages of the rock, including vegetation, fracturing and distribution of mosses and lichens. We then cleaned the rock. As *Le Orme dell’Uomo* are banned by law from using destructive means and chemical products, this meant removing the mosses and lichens using sticks, water and brushes. We then traced the engravings, including in the tracing any cracks in the rock, and subsequently reduced the tracings in order to document and file them.

Rock 96 has various ‘topographical’ representations (Figure 2), possibly field systems or landscapes, including one, very clear topographic type engraving (Figure 3), and a very clear, and very beautiful warrior figure (Figure 4), which I was lucky to be given to trace myself.

As part of the field course we also made various visits to nearby areas of interest, including the rock art parks of Naquane, Grosio and Seradina/Bedolina, the historic centre of Brescia with its roman ruins (Figure 5) and castle.

At the end of the two weeks I spent there, we had cleaned and fully recorded Rock 99 (Figure 6), Rock 100, and Rock 96. Work had also taken discovery of the 15th *Rosa Camuna* (Figure 7). The aims of *Le Orme dell’Uomo* are to continue this recording process, and judging by the density of the engravings in the area, this will continue for years to come.

Overall, the fieldwork was well-organised, and extremely interesting, the lectures given in the evenings were varied and informative, the staff and other volunteers were absolutely lovely (especially Sara, who taught me to see near-invisible details!), and the huge amounts of food provided by Roberto, the extremely local chef, were delicious.

The fieldwork helped me greatly with my Italian, as I had hoped, as although all information, conversations etc were translated into English for our benefit, the majority of the staff are Italian, and I spent most of my time with an Italian-only group, chosen purposely so that I had to practice as much as possible.

The fieldwork also gave me experience in an area of archaeology that is very interesting and exiting and I hope to return next summer to help to continue the work.

Trowel Rating: 5
Figure 6: Finished tracing of Vite Rock 99. Not to scale.

Figure 7: Rosa Camuna example from Naquane.
And finally, those invisible engravings:

The finished product – so many more lines! Black shows pecking/engravings, red shows natural cracking.

Bibliography (both used and useful).