Prehistory Society of Zimbabwe Newsletter 134

Society News

A busy couple of months since the last newsletter. In May, members were treated to two events, the first being a video on life in Ancient Britain, and the second an exhibition on Karl Mauch. sponsored by the German Embassy in Zimbabwe. The Karl Mauch exhibition, held at the National Gallery in Park Lane, Harare presented extracts, photographs and maps of his topographical, geological, botanical and ethnographical observations in his journals. exhibition will travel around Zimbabwe, being shown in the main cities for a limited time before being taken to Germany.

In June, Mr. Seke Katsamudanga of the University of Zimbabwe presented on the just-ended project examining the archaeology of the eastern highlands south of Mutare. An abstract of the research follows below.

We have now received enough contributions to produce our journal this year. First drafts of all the articles have been received and editing in now in progress. All things being equal expect Number 27 sometime towards the end of this year.

Your editor received several letters regarding the short article by Mr. Richard Wade on astronomy in the

Zimbabwe Culture, one of which is published here with the consent of the author. My reply follows.

I would like to say to our members that this is your newsletter and I am always looking for contributions on anything of interest - from both professionals and "amateurs" alike. The Society does not support all of the views expressed but we hope, that in the interests of public engagement in the subject archaeology, that through the medium of the newsletter opposing views may be aired and debated rather than leaving things hidden. Please do not hesitate to send your articles, comments, letters and queries to the newsletter editor at hubcapzw@googlemail.com dhubbard@mweb.co.zw

Upcoming Events

Wednesday 18th July 2007 - Ann Jefferies will be giving a short talk on her work as the local representative of the American Library of Congress, followed by Andrew Johnson giving a talk on recent archaeological and anthropological discoveries in the Pacific region. Wednesday 18th July at St. Georges College, Borrowdale Road, Harare. 5.15 for 5.30 pm. All welcome.

Postal Address for the Society Prehistory Society Of Zimbabwe P.O. Box A 723 Avondale Harare Zimbabwe

More Sources discussing Dwarf Cattle

Contributed by Adele and Simon Hamilton-Ritchie

From Archaeologists:

Quoted from page 90 of: Plug, I., Soper, R.C. and Chirawu, S. 1997. Pits, tunnels and cattle in Nyanga, Zimbabwe: new light on an old problem. The South African Archaeological Bulletin 52 (166): 89-94

"The entrances of the tunnels and passages lintelled are remarkably standardized at about 0,11 (sic) m high and 0,5 m wide, +- 0,1 m (they may be slightly larger inside). This would be too low and narrow for the body and probably the horns of an average modern cow, including 'unimproved' Nguni or Sanga cattle. There is, however, some evidence in local tradition for dwarf Shona cattle in the past; these were probably decimated by the rinderpest of the 1890s and bred out after the introduction of larger beasts. (1926) recorded a quite circumstantial account of the pits and wrote that, according to an informant, the cattle of those days were small and had very short horns. Some knowledge is still extant: village Claude Munditi. head Chirimanyo, who was born on Rhodes Estates in 1924, says he was told by his father that small humped cattle were kept in the pits and that their horns could be cut off if too big for the entrances. Finch (1949) was probably familiar with such traditions as she confidently asserted that the pits were for small cattle. Stead tried to check reports of small cattle in parts of Nyanga District and dispatched his Assistant Native Commissioner to the relevant area where "measured the horn span, the shoulder span, the hips, and the height. He recorded the following measurements:- Horns 20 inches [.51 m], shoulders 26 inches [.66 m], hips 27 inches [.69 m], and height 51 inches [1.29 m]" (Stead 1949:81). If this was shoulder height it is not particularly small at 1.29 m, but we are not told how the animal was selected, nor whether it was of average size for its breed. Nobbs (1927) and Roberts (1980) discussed the available evidence for small cattle but could find no record of actual size."

From Older Sources:

Quoted from page 153 of: Hall, R.N. and Neal, W.G. 1904. The Ancient Ruins of Rhodesia (Monomatapae Imperium) 2nd Edition. London: Methuen & Co. [Facsimile Reprint 1972 Bulawayo: Books of Rhodesia (Rhodesiana Reprint Library Volume 23)].

"In the more ancient debris heaps and under ancient cemented floors are horns of very small oxen - short-horned smaller than Guernsey cattle, and probably the breed from which the present Zambesi cattle originated. These were preserved by the cement-work by which they were hermetically sealed from the action of the weather. Longhorned cattle were not introduced into South Africa till late in the seventeenth century."

Quoted from page 312 of: Selous, F.C. 1881. A Hunter's Wanderings in Africa. London: Richard Bentley & Son. [Facsimile Reprint 1971 Bulawayo: Books of Rhodesia (Rhodesiana Reprint Library Volume 14)]

"January 7th [1878] - Went down to Sitanda's cattle post about four miles to the east. On the way I saw some konze antelope and zebra, and wounded one of the latter, but, after following a long way on the blood spoor, I lost it. At the cattle post there were about fifty head of cows and oxen and twenty small calves; these cattle were the smallest breed I had ever seen. I measured one of the largest cows (though they were all much of a size); she stood just 3ft. 4 in. [1.02m] at the Though so small, these little wither. cows are capital milkers; they all had very small horns, and were really beautiful little animals. Went on from the cattle post to the Lukanga river, where I shot a fine lechwe ram, an antelope that I did not expect to find in this part of Africa; it was, however, identical in every respect with the lechwes I have shot on the river Chobe. The Situtunga antelope (Tragelaphus Spekii) is also found in the swamps of the Lukanga; the natives here call it "n'zobe;" at Lake Bengweolo, according to Dr. Livingstone, it is called "n'zoe." On returning I found Owen much worse: he had a bad attack of fever."

F.C. Selous was at the time in what is now Zambia. The Lukanga river and swamp are due west of Kabwe. On 4th April that year he crossed the Zambezi going south again.

More on this topic to follow in the next newsletter.

Archaeological Research in the Ancestral Landscape of Manyikaland

Seke Katsamudanga Lecturer, Archaeology Unit, History Department, University of Zimbabwe, PO MP 167, Mount Pleasant, Harare, Zimbabwe

The Archaeology Unit of the University Zimbabwe, the Centre Development Studies at the University of Bergen, Norway, together with the National Museums and Monuments of Zimbabwe (NMMZ) have been conducting archaeological research in the eastern highlands of Zimbabwe, in the area south of Mutare. The research which began in 2002 and conducted under the name The Ancestral Landscape of Manyikaland, resulted in several archaeological sites being recorded. These range from Early, Middle and Late Stone Age, early and later farming communities, to Historical sites. The types range from rock paintings, scatters of stone artefacts and ceramics, iron working sites, grain bins, dolly holes, stone enclosures and pit structures.

Archaeological excavations recovered faunal remains, stone artefacts and ceramics which have been used to reconstruct the culture history of the area. Charcoal samples collected and dated show that the earliest occupation was about 8 thousand years ago. Results of the analysis of stone artefacts from the excavations have already been presented in the *Zimbabwean Prehistory No. 25* of 2005. Other results of this research project have been presented at various fora and would also be appearing in a special issue of the *Zimbabwea* journal which is expected to be out soon.

My own research within this project has been to investigate the spatial behaviour periods of the various cultural represented in the area. This investigation was facilitated through the employ of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and other technologies relevant for analysing spatial data. It also required assessment and collation of palaeo-environmental evidence derived from excavated data and previous research in the area and in southern Africa in general. The baseline of the palaeo-environmental assessment was to begin with the contemporary environments and check their variation, or lack thereof throughout the ages. Data from the sub-region was used for comparison and to reach at a reasonable deduction of the climatic situation in eastern Zimbabwe at various periods in prehistory. Of significance is the isotope evidence from South Africa, the Aeolian evidence in the northwest of Zimbabwe in the Hwange area, fluvial and geological evidence in various parts of the country, vegetation evidence in the highlands and similar eastern environments in southern Africa and faunal indications from different parts in the region.

Using the Exploratory Data Analysis (EDA) techniques in the Geostatistical and Spatial Analyst tools in the GIS software used (ArcGIS Arcview 9.1), I was able to detect some trends in the settlement behaviour of the different communities. Some of the analytical techniques were conducted using statistical packages such as Excel and WinIDAMS, in addition to the statistical capabilities of the ArcGIS software. Using these packages, I managed to observe trends that I consider to be

statistically significant relationships between archaeological sites and soils and mean annual rainfall, among others. However, there seem to be a significant avoidance of the now wetter areas of the and other upland especially during the Stone Age. There seem to be a shift towards the currently wetter areas as time progressed. Given what is known as the Little Ice Age during the second millennium AD, questions can be asked as to whether that change in settlement behaviour could have been a result of climatic variations across the Zimbabwean plateau. My conclusion is that climate and the physical environment had a role in the settlement behaviour in the research area, and probably in the whole of the eastern highlands of Zimbabwe. There is need for a serious palaeo-climatic research in the area in order to understand the spatial patterning of the prehistoric communities. Already the Archaeology Unit and partners are moving towards that kind of research.

Correspondence

05 April 2007

Hie all,

I am really disappointed with the tone this Newsletter is taking particularly the very uncritical approach on some of the issues relating to Great Zimbabwe. I would not be surprised to see another article in the following issues of the newsletter claiming that the Nyanga pit structures, which we now know accommodated the dwarf cattle, were 'slave-pits' or something of that sort. I say so because Richard Wade's 'findings' [for lack of a better term] are presented

as 'food for thought' in terms of search for alternative meanings for Great Zimbabwe.

I would like to state categorically that Richard Wade has done no research at, and cannot speak for, Great Zimbabwe, particularly when he uses flawed antiquarian methodologies of Robert Swan.

I was considering contributing an article to the Society's journal to be published later this year, but for reasons professional, I will not share this priviledge (sic) with Richard Wade. If the editors of this newsletter could be made aware of the fact that Wade is not an archaeologist, that he is not even accredited with ASAPA here in South Africa, and that he [and Cyril Hromnic [and being thick-skinned parchiderms (sic) both persons are] were torn to pieces at the recently held Symposium on Stonewalled Heritage in the Mpumalanga Province, they would in future accept some of these 'writings' with a lot more caution than what they have done.

Innocent Pikirayi

Reply from the Newsletter Editor:

09 April 2007

Dear Dr. Pikirayi,

Thank you for your letter (05/04/2007) concerning the contents of the Newsletter of the Prehistory Society of Zimbabwe number 133, specifically the short article by Richard Wade.

I admit the choice of wording to introduce the article was ill-considered

and misleading. What I simply meant by that statement is that I felt the research/ideas of Mr. Wade was of sufficient interest for our members to read it carefully and then offer their comments, as you have done. I do not in any way support his ideas or conclusions as to the meaning of the various features of Great Zimbabwe and related sites, despite what you may think.

I had planned to write a reply myself pointing out the flaws and inconsistencies I had perceived in his arguments for inclusion in the next number of the newsletter. However, due to the strength of feeling on your part, I would like to ask you to write a short article that fulfils the same. If you cannot, perhaps you would give me permission to reproduce your letter as it stands to inform our readers of the problems of his research.

As to your hasty decision not to "share this privilege" of contributing to a journal that will publish an article by Mr. Wade, I feel this is unfortunate and illconsidered. Again, we had been thinking of publishing the article followed by a series of short replies, in the manner of Current Anthropology. This is because such research needs to be published and discussed by academics to prevent wayward ideas taking hold in the public consciousness. This was done by Hall and Borland for Hronmik's work in SAAB and he was given a chance to reply in the next issue (1982 & 1983). The Digging Stick also has published some of the strange ideas about archaeological phenomena, notably the bored stones in the 1980s. However, with an extended series of letters and articles, by professionals and nonacademics alike, these ideas were

conclusively laid to rest. I was merely following in this tradition of creating a forum, i.e. a place for open discussion. Once the article for the journal by Mr. Wade had been finished being edited and corrected, you would have been among the people contacted to offer a reply. The offer to contribute remains open.

Finally, I would like to make it clear that anything published in the newsletter and iournal remains the responsibility of the author(s). As such I strongly protest your aspersion that "I would not be surprised to see another article in the following issues of the newsletter claiming that the Nyanga pit structures. which we now know accommodated the dwarf cattle, were 'slave-pits' or something of that sort." The Society, as a body, does not engage spurious such repetition reinvigoration of any ideas that were vanquished many years ago by solid archaeological research. publishing such research does not mean, in any way, that we support it or agree with it.

Yours sincerely, Paul Hubbard

Websites of Interest

African Heritage and Archaeology: http://www.ucl.ac.uk/archaeology/aha/in dex.htm This is a website created to contain information on current issues and research into African heritage, archaeology, history, anthropology and ethnography. It contains articles and short synopses of current and ongoing work with the aim of communicating results to as wide an audience as possible.

A biographical database of southern African scientists is available http://s2a3.up.ac.za/bio/Main.php So far some 1600 persons have been written up, most of whom were active before about The project includes scientists who were active in Zimbabwe and other states bordering on South Africa.

Zimbabwean Bibliography of Archaeology: www.sarada.co.zw (under >resources>research). It has 4762 entries, comprehensive author and subject indices and covers articles from the early 1860s to 2005, both within Zimbabwe and contiguous areas in surrounding countries. Published and unpublished sources English, Afrikaans, French, German, Portuguese and Russian have been incorporated. The bibliography is available to download as a PDF of about 1.5Mb in size which will take approximately 20 minutes using a 56k modem.

NOTE PLEASE!

Anything published in the newsletter remains the sole responsibility of the author(s). The Prehistory Society of Zimbabwe will not be held responsible for opinions expressed or ideas advanced.