



# Prehistory Society of Zimbabwe

## Newsletter 138

### **The first 50 years of the Prehistory Society of Zimbabwe: A Personal Reminiscence**

JOHN FORD

*7 Marston Close, Graniteside, Harare*

It is my honour to briefly discuss the first fifty years of the Society's existence in this short note. In 1958 Salisbury's expansion for light industry exposed in Graniteside trench diggings a lot of pottery, which was drawn to the attention of the then Director of the Queen Victoria Museum, Lt Col. Boulton. Mrs Elizabeth Goodall, an ethnologist on the Museum staff was the only person experienced in Archaeology, so a group of interested "diggers" was quickly gathered to carry out the rescue operation of the burial site which was uncovered, and which is now under the OK Bazaars Warehouse.

This group was the nucleus from which the Society was created with Lt Col. Boulton as Chairman named The Salisbury Prehistoric Society, constituted on 30 May 1958. Later it was remarked that it was the Society and NOT the members who were Prehistoric and it thus became the Mashonaland Prehistory Society. (We may well ask if a group of Prehistorians are known as a Fossil Collection!) Yet again later it was deemed that a wider sphere needed to be attracted and so it would be advantageous to rename the society to The Prehistory Society of Rhodesia. Again in April 1981 it changed title to The Prehistory of Zimbabwe to align with political change.

A small, select membership has continuously been active all that time, covering a wide variety of the many aspects of prehistory in the country and surrounds, adding invaluable to data and information in verbal, written and photographic record at grass-roots level – and below! – whilst providing much membership interest and activity variety.

The Prehistory Society publications began as Newsletters, then Journal No.1 in 1959 of the Salisbury Prehistoric Society, with James Crawford as Editor. This lapsed but in February 1969 we started regular publication from No.1 of *Rhodesian Prehistory* and despite name and editor changes, still is being produced today as *Zimbabwean Prehistory*, now in its 28<sup>th</sup> number.

Many names come to mind over the years of people who have served the Society. As Chairman: Doug Morley, Peter Garlake, Leighton Gale, Peggy Izzett spring to mind. Activities included a five year archaeological ground survey of the Darwendale Dam basin, revealing something like 81 sites, prior to the dam filling. A major achievement, led by Peggy Izzett with a band of enthusiasts, ending in a dig on Crebilly Farm.

Mozambique Island to the north-east was visited by a group of nine members, led by Doug Morley in a chartered plane in 1973. A group in convoy drove to Mapungubwe in the Northern Transvaal, led by myself and joining professor Eloff and his students from Wits University. The digs at the Coronation Park Campsite undertaken by Mrs Goodall on another early burial site was aided by members and the dig called "Malborough Man" was undertaken, working on this dig was Mitch Stirling who as a school boy maintained his interest and later wrote the valuable book on Civil Aviation History in Central Africa.

The Society encouraged young folk as members and set at the level of the Young Scientists Exhibitions, young Quinn later gave a very interesting talk on his work on fossils done under the guidance of Mike Raath. Mrs Elizabeth Goodall encouraged Senior Scouts of the 2nd Salisbury Senior Troop to record and report any Rock Art and historic sites they may have come across in their journeys; likewise she encouraged members of the Mountain club in their expeditions.

Rock Art recordings, photography and site surveys were carried out by Bert Petie and also by Elda Coretti. Digs at Mbagazewa (Monk's Kop Ossuary) by James Crawford and Doug Norley; also the Ranche House Schools of Archaeology gave members an introduction or extension to their amateur or professional experience at places like Zimbabwe Ruins, Zombepata. Some partook at Dambarare and Zwongombe digs. Outings to all manner of sites: Stone Age, Iron Age, Rock Art, mines and yes even to our earliest Harare refuse dumps near Chapman Golf Course in Eastlea.

Close liaison has been maintained between Museums and the Society which has been beneficial to both amateur and professional. Largely encouraging in these directions have been such wonderful people as Elizabeth Goodall, Cran Cooke, Mike Raath, Tom Huffman, Hillary Summers, Bob Brain, Josiah Moyo, Robert Soper and Dave Beach. Subjects of every aspect of our interests have been covered in lectures, talks, discussions and outings. Young member participation was greatly encouraged with such people as Paddy Hoble, Barry Gardener, Neil Jack, Lyn Hitzeroth, Caroline Thorpe, Rob Plowes and members of the Umtali High Schools History Societies, Rob Burrett and Paul Hubbard and Sinclair Knopf for from "Little Acorns, Mighty Oaks Do Grow"!

Towers of strength and enthusiasm also came from the likes of Rhona Barker, Rolf Chenoux-Repond, Corna Thornycroft, Veryan Mason, Elizabeth Knopf, Betty Rex, Peggy Izzett, Del Van Der Hoven, Dave Alexander, Jeremy Talbot and many others. Trips to places like Mtoko, Wedza, Inyanga, Diana's Vow, Pink Elephants and Harleigh Ruins, Van Niekerk Ruins, Lekkerwater Ruins, Matindere Ruins, Chibi area and Zimbabwe Ruins, to Matabeleland (where we once had a

Branch of the Society) to the Matopos, to Mazoe, Yellow Jacket Ruin and Chikanyoro near Sipolilo.

Samples of subjects covered included Dendro Chronology by Graham Guy; Brechia by Brain Brain; Fossils and Dinosaurs by Mike Reath and young Michael Quinn; Central African Linguistics by Rob; John Sheppard on Carbon Dating and the Gulbenkian Laboratory. Just a few of the enormous variety and fascinating subjects of interest covered over the fifty years. Active years, with monthly meetings and lectures held and reasonably attended.

Very much an active Society, though small in number. Quietly going on, the society has filled a great need in adding to our wonderful country's knowledge and past. Activity and action have never been wanting. In closing I hope the following years see a continuation and growth in the Prehistory Society of Zimbabwe. Congratulations on the FIRST FIFTY YEARS!

## **Sixth World Archaeological Congress: University College Dublin, Ireland**

ANNA MABREY

*Independent Archaeologist, Roundstone, Co., Galway, Ireland*

### **Schedule and Themes**

Seventy-four countries were represented at the Sixth World Archaeological Congress (WAC-6), 22 years after its controversial foundation. Papers were presented simultaneously in eighteen different venues that covered thirty-three different general themes in four days! Each presentation was allocated between ten and twenty minutes depending on the number to be given in each two-hour session.

Every theme and sub-theme had interesting, practical, and theoretical subject matter so I chose the sessions I attended based on three main points: relevance to my own research interests, Africanist presentations and papers given by friends and colleagues. This approach gave me a well-rounded experience at the congress that included presentations from six continents, specialised topics from geoarchaeology to ceramics, and new ideas and methods that will contribute to my own research.

Several pre-conference events were held Sunday evening including the Opening Ceremony. It included speeches by WAC-6 officers that covered the mission, history, and current issues with the conference. The political and social situation where scholars in Zimbabwe try to work was highlighted, as well as their missed presence. The current president of the International Union of Pre- and Protohistoric Sciences (IUPPS) also spoke, in a rather defensive manner, about the continuing relevance of that congress, and about the importance of belonging to both the IUPPS and WAC. The ceremony was closed with a colourful, loud, and energetic welcome ritual/blessing conducted by three Maori men from New Zealand. A Welcome Reception with complimentary food and wine following the two hour ceremony concluded Sunday's events.

### **Day one**

The "Migration and Movement-Interpretive Frameworks for People on the Move" theme/session included an excellent paper on contemporary Tuareg manipulation of "traditional" material culture given by Stefania Merlo. Also in that session: a case study of isotopic evidence of diet

change in the Kalahari given by Morongwa Mosothwane; origin myths in pre-colonial Lakes Region by Ceri Ashley; and a controversial paper on Polynesian chickens found in “pre-contact” Americas. I managed to catch thirty minutes of overtime papers in the geoarchaeology/cave deposits theme that included a paper given by a colleague from my last field season in Sudan. The first day was an introduction to the week-long, mad rush to attend every paper, grab biscuits during the coffee breaks between sessions, network and mingle, cruise the multitude of poster presentations, and choke down some lunch before attending one of the mid-day, hour and a half plenary sessions!

### **Day two**

There were some excellent presentations in the first session I attended, “New Approaches to Heritage and Past”, that included a paper by Sada Mire on Somali perspectives on ritual landscapes and heritage management; a paper by Mike Rowlands on development, healing, and the reconstruction of heritage in Liberia; and a paper titled “Is indigenous archaeology possible?” given by Johan Hegardt.

The second session under the theme Materialising Identities focused on “Cross-Material Dynamics and Cross-Craftmanship.” A former supervisor was giving a paper on finds of mixed cultural traditions from a recent dig dated to the early Viking period in Ireland. During the same session Joanna Sofaer gave a riveting paper analysing how ceramics and house layouts showed changes in social organisation and use of space at a tell site in Bronze Age Hungary.

An intense line-up of presentations took place in the room dedicated to “Time and Change in Archaeology” under the theme: “Archaeological theory? Legacies, Burdens, Futures.” Subjects such as the relevance of common temporal scopes - i.e. Bronze Age, and ethnographic regions - i.e. Europe in the Mesolithic, and prehistoric peoples’ concept of “future” generations were discussed. The scope and diversity of topics as well as presenters was stimulating, but also exhausting. By the end of Day 2 everyone was ready for the mid-congress break.

### **Day four**

Back from the mid-congress break and tours, everyone was refreshed and ready for the last two days of posters and presentations. The first session I attended was “Techniques of Rock Art” under the “Archaeologies of Art” theme. This session focused on technologies in recording and exhibition of rock art. Liam Brady discussed computer enhancement of digital images to reveal “invisible” figures in Australian rock-art. Cornelia Kleinitz discussed recording Sudanese rock art in the Nubian Valley based on limited time, imminent destruction, and other identifiable uses of rock associated with the art such as games and percussion. Cutting-edge technology for recording rock art, presented by Mark Mudge, detailed how the use of 3D image capture through dense photogrammetry can produce the most accurate image with relatively little equipment and cost.

The second session of the day was “Politics and Practice: Archaeology in North Africa” under the theme “Reflections on Archaeology and Politics.” It included papers on interpretations of Carthaginian infant sacrifice based on shifting Judeo-Christian and Arab-Islamist interests; recording the Algerian past including Berbers and ‘Berberism’; and the “political and ethical dimensions of rescue archaeology on the Middle Nile.” These papers were insightful about issues in Northern African archaeology to which many of (us) Sub-Saharan archaeologists aren’t exposed. The ethical, controversial and often misunderstood issues embedded in the Sudanese salvage projects and subsequent population relocations is a difficult issue I’ve personally been involved in and has received a fair amount of coverage.

The final session I attended on Day 4 was from the theme “Peopling the Past, Individualising the Present” entitled “Humanity at the Margins: Osteoarchaeological perspectives to life on the edge.” This was the most fascinating session, both in subject matter and in presentation delivery that I attended throughout the congress. The papers included “The Prehistory of Disability and Deformity” given by Nick Thorpe; “At the Edge of the World: the Norse in Greenland” by George Scott; a paper on external auditory exostosis (a development of bony growth in the ear as a result of habitual exposure to extremely cold air and water, aka “surfer’s ear”) in a contact population in Tierra del Fuego; a presentation on unmarked 19-20th century infant burial area within an Irish ringfort given by Linda Lynch; a paper on Irish famine workhouse burials and autopsies given by Johny Geber; and a paper on the health of the last African slaves in Surinam given by Maria Okumura. Many receptions were organised after the presentations including a wine reception at the National Museum in Dublin and a BIEA reception at UCD. The relaxed environment was a perfect conclusion to the day because discussions were far from over and the new venues provided exposure to different colleagues.

### **Day five**

There was a short schedule on Friday, but the line-up was as significant and intense as day one. The first session I sat in on was “The archaeology of power” under the theme “Materialising Identities I: Personhood, Politics and the Presentation of Identity.” Presentations included topics on forms of East Asian power; mortuary practice in Korea; agency role of empires in the Levant; “Coins, cult and power in Hellenistic-Roman Palestine”; and a royal tomb in Palenque, Chiapas, Mexico. The final session I attended was “Unmasking Multivocality in Archaeology” under the main theme of “Memory, Archaeology and Oral Tradition.” Peter Schmidt gave a dry reading of his paper on “Reclaiming Social Memory from Colonial Constructions that Obscure Multivocality.” Lindsey Weiss spoke about the construction of heritage at a museum in South Africa “linking” a historic diamond field hotel site with rock art. Johnathon Walz spoke about the role of archaeologists in contemporary communities whilst trying to conduct research on oral traditions. Hour by hour the conference attendees thinned out, and I left before the last session due to my own schedule conflict, but it was obvious that WAC6 was a great success, despite some initial pessimistic predictions on Irish organisation and efficiency.

### **Conclusion**

WAC6 was a huge success by the standards of turn-out, diversity of topics, and coverage of issues central to WACs mission including “the effect of archaeology on host communities, the ownership, conservation, and exploitation of the archaeological heritage, the application of new technologies in archaeology and in archaeological communication” (Smith, WAC6 program, 2008, 39). The only problem I was aware of was the travel funding scheme that did not cover airfare resulting in exclusion or financial hardship of many archaeologists. The week-long conference gave me a boost that we all need in our work sometimes. Reconnecting with friends, hearing about new developments in commercial and research archaeology, thinking about new problems and possibilities with my own research, and meeting people whose work I’ve only read about were all parts of the positive impact of this conference.

The WAC-06 program is available online at [www.ucd.ie/wac-6](http://www.ucd.ie/wac-6). For more information about the founding of WAC, membership, or information on WAC-06 access the website: [www.worldarchaeologicalcongress.org](http://www.worldarchaeologicalcongress.org)

## **Mozambique: Samora Machel's birth place declared 'cultural heritage'**

*Agencia de Informacao de Mocambique (Maputo)*

The Mozambican government has decided to grant the locality of Chilembene, in the southern province of Gaza, the birthplace of the country's first president, Samora Machel, the status of a national cultural heritage site. President Armando Guebuza made the announcement at Chilembene on Monday 29 September, which would have been Machel's 75th birthday. Samora Machel became President of the Mozambican Liberation Front (FRELIMO) in 1970, and led it to victory in the independence war against Portuguese colonial rule. He proclaimed Mozambican independence on 25 June 1975, and was President of the Republic until his death on 19 October 1986, in a plane crash at Mbuzini, just inside South Africa, widely believed to have been caused by the apartheid military.

Guebuza declared that just as the assassins had been wrong to imagine that the murder of Mondlane would end the struggle for independence, so those who killed Samora Machel were deceiving themselves if they imagined that by physically eliminating him they would eliminate the causes that he defended. "A man of his stature is inseparable from the ideals of the people", said Guebuza. "He becomes immortal, an obligatory reference point for our people". He claimed that "Samora's dream is now a reality in the country", taking as an example the prestige that Mozambique now enjoys in such regional and international fora as the United Nations, the African Union and SADC (Southern African Development Community), and the social and economic development that Mozambique has undergone in recent years, in areas such as education, health, water supply, and the expansion of the electricity grid and communications networks.

Under Machel's leadership, Guebuza recalled, Mozambique did not only free itself from the cruelties of colonial rule, but also contributed to the liberation of the peoples of Zimbabwe, Namibia and South Africa, and thus to the overthrow of apartheid and racism in the southern African region. Speaking to the many thousands of people who made their way to Chilembene for the celebrations, Guebuza urged Mozambicans to take inspiration from the ideals of Samora Machel and others of his generation, who fought for the country's freedom. They were the role models for Mozambicans facing the challenges of today, particularly the fight against poverty.

## **Scientists Study Gold-Laden 16th-Century Shipwreck in Namibia**

A treasure-laden 16th-century Portuguese vessel that ran aground off Namibia's Atlantic coast was hailed Monday by archaeologists as providing a rare insight into the heyday of seafaring explorations between Europe and the Orient. "This is a cultural treasure of immense importance," Bruno Werz told *Deutsche Presse-Agentur dpa* when offering journalists a first glimpse of the precious find at the excavation site in Namibia's diamond-rich "*sperrgebiet*" or no-go zone.

The shipwreck, which was discovered by geologists dredging the seabed for diamonds in April and was covered in sand Monday for preservation purposes, is believed to be the oldest yet found in sub-Saharan Africa. Werz is leading a team of archeologists and geologists from Namibia, the United States, Portugal, South Africa and Zimbabwe in excavating the ship.

Speculation had been rife that the vessel could be linked to Portuguese explorer Bartholomew Diaz, the first European to round the Cape of Good Hope in the year 1488. But that theory was put to bed by the archaeologists, who revealed that some of the around 2,000 gold coins discovered at the site were dated October 1525, 25 years after Diaz disappeared.

A Portuguese archaeologist described the wreck as the best-preserved example of Portuguese seafaring efforts found outside Portugal. He attributed its good condition to its long burial in sand, which preserves wood. Apart from the gold, the ship's rich bounty includes 1.4 kilograms of silver coins, copper ingots, cannons and navigational instruments.

A trident indented on the ingots shows them to have been supplied by German merchant house Jakob Fugger - a known supplier of ingots to the Portuguese crown in the era of the Habsburg dynasty. The shipwreck is located near Oranjemund, around 160 kilometres south of the town of Luederitz, site of a small diamond mine.

With state diamond mining company Namdeb spending vast amounts of money on keeping the sea at bay while the excavations are taking place, pressure is on the team to wrap up the work by early October. The coins, which are now the property of the Namibian government, have already been spirited away for safe-keeping. The wood is destined in the short-term for the US, where it will be preserved.

## **New Publications on Zimbabweanist Archaeology**

Clarke, M. 2008. *Mambo Hills: Historical and Religious Significance*. Bulawayo: 'amaBooks.

This short booklet by Oxford academic Marieke Clarke considers the history of the sacred *zimbabwe* site to the north-east of Bulawayo that is also known as *Intaba zi ka Mambo* or *Manyanga*. Officials of the Mwali Religion that is practised there took leading roles in the War of the Red Axe of 1896, which nearly ended British South Africa Company rule in Southern Rhodesia.

Chirikure, S. & Pwiti, G. 2008. Community Involvement in Archaeology and Cultural Heritage Management: An Assessment from Case Studies in Southern Africa and Elsewhere. *Current Anthropology* 49 (3): 467-485.

Community archaeology has conferred an alternative dimension on conventional archaeology and heritage management, empowering previously powerless peoples, particularly the indigenous and local communities that have lost rights to their heritage through colonialism. So important has its impact been that there has been only limited reference in the literature to its problems. Examination of case studies from various parts of the world reveals that problems associated with defining what a community is and who is indigenous, coupled with the existence of multiple communities with multiple interests, have sometimes diminished the utility of the approach. In some cases, archaeologists and heritage managers have been unwilling to give up some of their powers and have continued to view local communities as only passive partners. In others, local communities have considered their views and concerns more important than those of the archaeologists. As a result, the so-called equal partnerships between archaeologists and communities have disappointingly ended up as uneasy relationships. Without effective solutions to some of these problems, community archaeology may remain a goal to be pursued rather than becoming standard practice.

Hubbard, P. & Mabrey, A.F. 2007. Birds and Rock Art in Zimbabwe. *Honeyguide: Journal of BirdLife Zimbabwe* 53 (1&2): 13-24.

This article provides a brief overview of past and present studies and currently accepted interpretations regarding the appearance of birds in the Rock Art of Zimbabwe. A variety of species, notably ostrich, swifts, swallows and cranes are discussed. The position of avifauna within Bushman society is extensively reviewed, complemented by relevant case studies.

Murray, E. & Manyanga, M. 2008. *Pangolin, Pythons and Panthers (sic): Faunal Remains from KoBulawayo, a 19<sup>th</sup> Century Ndebele Capital, Western Zimbabwe*. Harare: National Museums and Monuments of Zimbabwe. (Museum Memoir New Series No. 2).

The long-awaited faunal report on the bones recovered from KoBulawayo the late 19th century Ndebele capital has finally been published. This important study shows that domestic stock - cattle, sheep and goat - were mainly exploited. A range of wild animals were found represented by small numbers of bones. Their presence is explained by their ritual and/or royal significance and importance to the wide variety of cultures living at the site, all of which contributed to the early formation of the Ndebele State. Unfortunately the publication is marred by poor editing and worse printing that makes reading the book an ordeal due to the often blurred pictures and smudged text.

Swan, L. 2008. *Minerals and Managers. Production contexts as evidence for social organisation in Zimbabwean prehistory*. Uppsala: Uppsala Universitet. (Studies in Global Archaeology 12).

The social contexts that defined the nature of mineral production and exchange altered between the mid-first and mid-second millennium AD, as social ranks emerged and political and economic systems became increasingly complex. The thesis is a commentary on how the motivation of society to broaden its resource base, to improve the benefits to themselves and to society in general, contributed to the emergence of leaders and, ultimately, of an elite class. The focus of the research is on iron and copper production because the author has examined gold production thoroughly in a previous study. Four published papers outline the history of iron and copper production in Zimbabwe. The papers provide case studies of the scale and social context of iron and copper production and exchange.

**Postal Address:** Prehistory Society of Zimbabwe, P.O. Box A 723, Avondale, Harare, Zimbabwe.

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