

# SOUTH AFRICAN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY



# GNEWS

Natal Branch Newsletter

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## WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

We extend a hearty welcome to new members Craig Allison, Sheila Begg, Martin and Nydia Conrad, Patrick Homan, Mary Lange, Geordie Gartrell and Klaus Stickrott.

## FORTHCOMING ATTRACTIONS

### 21 March 2003: Welcome members of the Western Cape Branch

Members are encouraged to come to the Imperial Hotel, Pietermaritzburg at about 6:30 p.m. on Friday 21 March to meet and welcome members of the Western Cape Branch of the Society. Unfortunately the drinks will not be free, but do not let this deter you! Thirteen members of the branch will be visiting sites in KwaZulu-Natal between 21 and 27 March.

### 23 April 2003: Natal Branch AGM and 16<sup>th</sup> Oliver Davies Memorial Lecture

**Where:** Hillcrest Library, Delamore Road, Hillcrest (easy to find, detailed directions available from Chrissie).

**Times:** AGM at 18:00 (six o'clock), agenda at the end of *Gnews*; 16<sup>th</sup> Oliver Davies Memorial Lecture at 18:30 (six-thirty).

**Speaker:** Dr John Hilton

**Topic:** *Atlantis and the eruption of Thera*

Plato wrote of an ancient civilization and naval power on the island of Atlantis, sunk by the gods to punish the aggression of its kings. Thera, also known as Santorini, is a volcanic island which was destroyed by a cataclysmic eruption in c. 1500 BC. Is Thera the site of Atlantis? Come to the 16<sup>th</sup> Oliver Davies Memorial Lecture to hear the fascinating details and see slides presented by Dr John Hilton from the Classics Department at the University of Natal in Durban.

#### Dinner after the lecture

Guido's in the Heritage Market, Hillcrest. Superb Italian food and only R5 corkage fee. Contact Chrissie for bookings (031) 563 8659, email: [jgscott@absamail.co.za](mailto:jgscott@absamail.co.za)

**Deadline for bookings:** midnight Sunday 20 April 2003.

## **29 April 2003: film at Natal Museum**

*Spirit of the rocks*, a film by Dr Peter Amman will be shown during lunchtime at the Natal Museum. The film deals with San rock art and modern perceptions of the art in various southern African communities. It ranges from Namibia to Botswana and southwards to South Africa and KwaZulu-Natal. Researchers Pat Vinnicombe and Megan Biesele feature prominently. There is a good chance that Peter Amman himself will be available to introduce the film. Watch the press for details or contact the Natal Museum PR Department (033-3451404). Rock art enthusiasts who cannot make it need not despair. There will be a repeat showing on the Kamberg excursion planned for later this year.

## **15 May 2003: Society AGM**

All members of the South African Archaeological Society are reminded that the Annual General Meeting of the society will be held at 20:00 at the Marie Curie Lecture Theatre, University of the Witwatersrand Medical School, York Rd, Parktown, Johannesburg. The agenda is at the end of *Gnews*.

## **Other**

- 10-12 May: Weekend outing to Kamberg.
- July: Visit Gavin Whitelaw in the field.
- August: Louis Leakey Memorial lecture by Francis Thackeray
- September: Weekend to Border Cave, Ulundi, Ondini
- November: Christmas Party. Speaker: Mike Taylor

## **RECENT ACTIVITIES**

### ***Archaeological issues with English incunables, a talk by David Scott-McNab, 2 October 2002.***

David Scott-McNab, a student of medieval language and literature, gave a quietly humorous talk on the early history of printed incunables (books) in the Durban Natural Science Museum. The beautiful illuminated manuscripts we commonly associate with medieval times were rare indeed, comprising only a tiny proportion of books. Most books were copied by hand from others by people bent on self-improvement, or by professional scribes if the improver was sufficiently wealthy. The copied pages were bound together to create 'books' made up of a variety of texts. Miscellany was popular; books are dominated by the language of hawking and hunting, reflecting the interests of the social classes with access to literature. They also contain an element of anti-religious sentiment. David showed slides of pages of a book collated by John Bennett, then a vicar at Trinity College, containing lines and lines of collective nouns written margin to margin, without punctuation and with few capitals.

The Bodelian Library in Oxford contains another book with the same text as Bennett's, copied by a professional scribe over a period of about 40 years in the second half of the 1300s. It is also written margin to margin. In this instance, the scribe used elementary punctuation, in particular a sort-of floating full-stop called a 'punctus' which functions as a comma, and three or four forms of the letter 'a'.

William Caxton established the first printing press in London in 1476. Earliest fonts were based on manuscript form, because this is what people were used to reading. Typefaces were deliberately irregular. Printing, however, led inevitably to standardisation.

Capital letters were one of the few early forms of punctuation. Letters had more forms than today, with elaborate 'proper' capitals, an intermediate form and a small form. The various forms were used to start a sentence, create a rhetorical pause, highlight an important word or

denote a paragraph. Double small letters could also indicate capitals. Not only were there more forms of letters, but also more letters than today, for instance to indicate 'th'. 'I' and 'J' were not distinguished; the sound depending on the context of the letter. Research difficulty is compounded because the use of a particular letter or form could be a mistake, or be related to the compositor's often very individual code. Researchers must decode the pattern of use, a task made more difficult if more than one compositor was involved.

In the Caxton workshop were at least two different compositors slightly different in habit with respect to the intermediate 'a'. Since none of Caxton's earlier books is dated, some detective work is needed to establish which are earlier and which later editions. Reprinting of books involved a complete reset, and in one book (with the same list of collective nouns, now in columns) different editions are evident from the use of the intermediate 'a'. Two copies of this book exist, one in New York and one in Cambridge. Debate on which is earlier is unresolved, though David suggested the New York copy.

Some collective nouns: a superfluity of nuns; a charge of curates; a herd of harts; a cast of hawks; a pride of lions; a cackle of hyaenas; a leap of leopards. And for archaeologists, David suggests a dig, a digging, a delving or a trowel of archaeologists. Or, perhaps more appropriately: a mouldwarp of archaeologists (from Anglo-Saxon 'mold' = 'earth' and 'weorpan' = 'to throw'). 'Mouldwarp' is actually an obsolete word for a mole

### ***The archaeology of place: ceramics and spatial organisation in the Thukela valley 1200 years ago, a talk by Kent Fowler, 30 October 2002***

In recent years society members have heard a lot about Ndongondwane, the ninth century AD Iron Age in the Thukela valley. Several excavators have worked at the site, including Tim Maggs and Jannie Loubser. In the mid-1990s Len van Schalkwyk, then of the KwaZulu Monuments Council, and Haskel Greenfield of the University of Manitoba in Canada started a new research project which has lasted several years. Kent Fowler worked at the site as a student with Haskel and Len and did his PhD on Ndongondwane ceramic production, use and discard. Ndongondwane ceramics include pots, bowls, fragments of large hollow ceramic heads, human figurines and furnace remains. Kent is currently a post-doctoral research fellow in archaeology at the University of Calgary, Canada.

The basic layout of Ndongondwane is well known. Two areas called the Mound Area and the Dung Area are roughly central to an arc of middens and hut residues. In the Mound Area excavators found a hut floor covered over with deposit from a range of activities, including ivory working and iron smelting. The Mound also yielded the remains of at least four hollow ceramic heads. The cattle pen is located in the Dung Area and is associated with metal working debris, food waste and broken pottery.

Kent's concern was to test models (hypotheses) about settlement organisation through a reconstruction of the practice of people who once lived in the village. On the basis of his analysis he suggested at least two pottery firing places on the site. One is on the edge of the site some distance from residential area – reasonable given the risk that firing posed for thatch structures. He also suggested that firing occurred in the Mound Area where there is evidence of iron smelting. Both processes involve transformation of a natural material into a cultural product. Kent noted that in a number of societies in Africa the two processes are linked; iron workers tend to marry potters.

Kent argued for evidence of feasting near the cattle pen of the Dung Area, though his data show a limited number of serving vessels in this area. This is in contrast to a midden in the outer arc which he suggested was associated with unmarried men, who evidently rarely, if ever, did their own cooking. Attempted identification of the 'chief's area' produced ambiguous results. Its location is not necessarily indicated by relative proportion of fine ceramic ware, nor by quantity of ceramic debris. Finally, Kent argued that the pits on the site were filled when the

village was abandoned. Pits on many agriculturists sites of this period contain pots with their bases knocked out. This, Kent suggests, symbolised the end of a household as a social entity – without pots, households could no longer fulfil their social functions.

### **‘Sleeping’ and ‘resting’ and the Christmas Party, 20 November 2002 by Chrissie Sievers**

Burials may not seem an appropriate subject for a Christmas party but the fascinating rendition of the subject set the tone for a phenomenally enjoyable end-of-year occasion. In his usual entertaining and brilliant way Professor Tom Huffman of Wits University treated us to a brief and very interesting interpretation of ‘sleeping’ and ‘resting’ positions of skeletons uncovered by the excavation of an approximately 1000-year-old village in Botswana. Tom and his colleague McEdward Murimbika have used Shona ethnography and physical anthropology to interpret the 1000-year-old burial patterns. In Shona ethnography, death is seen as a temporary state: one lives, dies and is reborn. Commoners ‘sleep’ but chiefs ‘rest’ when they are buried as is evidenced by chiefs buried in sitting positions and ordinary people ‘sleeping’ on their right sides aligned to the setting sun. For Shona people, west and sunset represent death while east and sunrise represent life.

The stretcher used to carry the corpse has the same name as the temporary door of a house that has just been built. The ‘sleeping’ analogy is reinforced by the use of sleeping mats and blankets for the corpses and the idea that one sleeps in the womb before birth. The grave itself represents the womb. About nine months to a year after burial (approximately equal to the gestation period), a remembrance ceremony is held and those adults who have had children become ancestors; one’s role in the spirit world parallels one’s role in the real world. In practical terms this means that the men will be buried in the men’s area, namely the cattle kraal, and the adult women behind the main houses in the women’s private area. Ideally children play in the public area out in front of their mothers’ huts and this is where they are buried. Infants (foetuses and newborns up to a few days old) are buried in the house which can represent the womb because symbolically, these babies have not left the womb. These practices described ethnographically fit as an explanation or interpretation of the archaeological remains and has led Tom to conclude that certain beliefs, such as those about death, are incredibly tenacious, and the more widespread these beliefs are, the greater the likelihood the belief is of considerable antiquity.

Tom Huffman is at the forefront of Iron Age research and it was not only a privilege to have him share his latest findings with us, but a real pleasure! The fun did not stop with his talk but continued on into the Natal Museum Mammal Hall appropriately decorated in safari kitsch. Undeterred by the glassy stares of large cats, huge stuffed pachyderms, and towering giraffes (with matching table napkins) branch members and friends tucked into delicious soups and traditional local foods, followed by the sweetest and juiciest watermelons on earth. In the time-honoured tradition of the Natal Branch, it was once again a great Christmas Party!

### ***The Axumite Culture of the Horn of Africa, a talk by Chester Cain, University of the Witwatersrand, 5 February 2003***

Chester Cain, post-doctoral research fellow in archaeology at the University of the Witwatersrand, presented a well-illustrated talk on Axum, the capital of a powerful and prosperous civilisation in first millennium AD Ethiopia. Axum is located at the northern end of the Ethiopian Highlands, a mountainous massif at the northern end of the Rift Valley. The site and modern town above it lie at an altitude of 2200 m and the end of a three-day trek from the coast. Archaeological investigation of the Axumite culture has occurred intermittantly since the early twentieth century; Chet participated in a five-year British-funded project in the 1990s.

Axumite culture is prefaced by developments in the first millennium BC, when by the 500s BC urbanisation existed in an early state called D'mt in Pre-Axumite inscriptions. Strongly influenced by South Arabia, the culture developed its own distinctive character; language and script evolved from their South Arabian origin to become increasingly like Ge'ez, ancestor of some Ethiopian and Eritrean languages. Axum probably developed from Pre-Axumite culture, becoming well established by AD 100. At its peak in the first millennium AD, Axum was regarded as an equal of the other great centres of civilization: China, Persia and Rome. Through its Red Sea port of Adulis, Axum was the lynchpin on which trade between the Mediterranean and India turned and a funnel through which African goods left the continent for international dispersal. Exports included ivory, gold, precious stone, aromatic substances (including civet perfume), rhino horn, live animals and slaves. Imports comprised iron and non-ferrous artefacts, items of precious metals, fabrics, glass and ceramic items, vegetable oils and spices. Its web of trading links extended far and wide and it was possibly due to Axum's prominence that the Nile Valley trade diminished after the first century AD. The distribution of coins, both foreign and Axumite, provide a snap-shot of the extent of trade links. Axum coinage, minted between the 200s and 600s, was possibly based on the Byzantine system.

The Ethiopian Highlands and its slopes provided a range of agricultural niches, allowing for the cultivation of a rich array of crops, including wheat, barley, teff (a cereal), pulses, grapes (for wine) and noog. Axum itself was located adjacent to fertile plains with intensive agricultural systems. Domestic animals included cattle (also used to draw ploughs), sheep, goats, asses and mules, though cattle dominate the faunal assemblages (as Chet's own research indicated). Elephants may also have been domesticated for royal use. Inscriptions of King Ezana (AD 300s) provide herd sizes: 31 957 head of cattle, 51 050 sheep, 827 beasts of burden – exact numbers indicating precise accounting. (Inscriptions of this time include Greek, South Arabic and Ge'ez script.)

Axum is best known for its architecture and monumental stonework. Prestige Axum buildings are characterised by a bold distinctive style: courses of stone set off by finely-dressed corners. These elite structures were dotted around the capital. Stone stelae occur throughout the kingdom, some plain, some finely dressed or with intricately-carved detail. The Akum stelae are most impressive; tall thin slabs of stone carved to represent multi-storied buildings and erected upright above underground chambers that were probably tombs. Stela 1 is broken, probably the result of it falling during its attempted erection. It was nearly 33 m in length, weighs an estimated 517 tonnes and is considered by archaeologist David Phillipson 'a strong candidate for ... the largest single monolith which humans have ever proceeded to erect'. This may have been the last attempt to erect a stela, in the AD 300s; the practice was abandoned following the adoption of Christianity around this time. Axumites continued to construct underground tomb complexes which although robbed, have yielded pottery, ivory and brass boxes.

Christianity came to the Axumite civilisation around 330 during the reign of King Ezana and since developed into a key resource for the expression of a national Ethiopian identity. The cross replaced symbols of the sun and moon on Axumite coins, stelae construction ceased and Ezana promoted his rule in the name of the christian God. Today Axum is still an important religious centre where Ethiopians believe the Ark of the Covenant resides. It is attended by one person and can be seen by no-one else.

The Axumite civilisation declined after the 600s (coins were no longer issued from this time), retreating into isolation and finally collapsing in the 900s. The end is not well understood, environmental change may have contributed, and the rise of Islamic trade and changing international trading networks must have had an impact.

## ***Secondary products revolution, a talk by Haskel Greenfield, University of Manitoba, Canada, 19 February 2003***

Secondary animal products are those that can be continually extracted – extraction of primary products results in the immediate death of the animal. Secondary products include milk, wool and traction power. Secondary products clearly have nothing to do with the initial domestication of animals – people were unlikely to have considered fierce and dangerous wild cattle for their traction potential. Similarly, the potential of the barely-woolly undercoat on wild sheep must have been unrecognised at initial domestication. The earliest evidence of the Secondary Products Revolution comes from the Near East from cuneiform tablets and cylinder seals dating to around 3500 BC. By the second millennium BC (2000–1000 BC) there is evidence of complex ploughs. Moving back in time, around 8000 BC we find no evidence for the extraction of secondary products.

Unable to do research in Iraq because of the Gulf War of the 1980s, Haskel chose the Balkans of eastern Europe. Domesticated animals appear in southern Bulgaria around 7000 BC. A thousand years later, ceramic sieves possibly used to separate curds from whey appear in the archaeological record. By post-Neolithic/Bronze Age times hundreds of these occur in every site. Spindle whorls indicate wool spinning whereas earlier in Neolithic times, fabrics were made of flax rather than wool. From Eneolithic sites (4000–2000 BC, between Neolithic and Bronze Age) come models of primitive wagons, while ploughmarks are preserved beneath burial mounds.

Haskel studied faunal remains for evidence of these changes, examining assemblages from Neolithic through to Iron Age sites. Analysis showed that Neolithic assemblages were dominated by wild animals, reflecting the importance of hunting as a source of meat. By the Bronze Age, the wild component disappears. The age-of-death profiles of the bone assemblages proved particularly significant. Modern data show that different types of herds have different death profiles. For example, in milking herds some 60 % of the young animals are removed in the first year. In wool flocks, 30 % of the young are culled in the first year. Interestingly, the profile for traction animals is the same as that for wool flocks. Because archaeological data can be skewed by varying recovery techniques as well as varying preservation, it is important that archaeologists understand these factors fully.

Definite patterns were recognisable in the archaeological record. It is clear that Neolithic domestic animals were exploited for their primary products (meat, hide, bone) rather than secondary products. Distinct differences are evident for different animals in the post-Neolithic periods. Pig assemblages have a meat extraction profile, as with the Neolithic (Haskel dropped in the fact that pig milk is better for humans than cow milk, but pigs are difficult to milk). Post-Neolithic cattle assemblages have a wool/traction profile, but *not* a milk profile. Sheep were exploited for both meat and wool.

Greater intersite variation exists in the post-Neolithic periods. This is a consequence of transhumant pastoralism. Whereas Neolithic people settled only in lowland areas close to the coast, in the post-Neolithic periods people took advantage of summer grazing in upland areas and moved back to the lowlands in the winter months. The more complex economic range is reflected in the varying use of domestic herds. It is important to recognise though, that post-Neolithic people did not specialise in any of the secondary products, so the neat modern death profiles do not occur in the archaeological record.

By 3000 BC Europe had experienced the Secondary Product Revolution, some 3000 to 4000 years after farmers entered the region. Haskel posed a question: at what stage in the movement south of Iron Age agriculturists in Africa can we identify the exploitation of secondary products?

## LOCAL NEWS

### Lottery money

So it really happens, someone you know has got money from the National Lottery (sadly not the jackpot, but funding). Last year the Natal Museum Archaeology Department submitted an application for funds for two projects, rock art recording and museum exhibits. Late in December we heard that we'd been given R636 000, one-tenth of the museum's annual income. The bulk of the money (R520 000) is for the construction of three exhibits. These will make up the Towns and Trade theme of the human science exhibits. The theme will deal with social transformations in East Africa (Swahili), southern Africa (Zimbabwe culture) and the early Portuguese Indian Ocean trade. This money is a huge boost for the museum and allows us to produce truly world class exhibits.

The rest of the money is for a rock art recording project. Our intention is create a digital rock art archive at the museum. This part of the recording project has been somewhat superseded by recent nation-wide developments (see piece below on SARADA), but the need to continue recording is critical. The recording will be done by a group of volunteers linked to the Natal Museum. The group was the brainchild of Anne Solomon when she worked at the museum and is chaired by your committee member and manager of branch finances, Adrian Flett. Now called the Rock Art Recording and Research Unit, the group will use the funds to purchase photographic equipment and supplies, cover running costs and training costs. We plan to submit another application to continue the recording effort next year.

## OTHER NEWS

### SARADA: a digital archive of rock art images by Joané Swart

SARADA is a proposal initiated through discussions between UCT, Wits, and the Mellon Foundation to digitise rock art images held by South African museums and universities. The Mellon Foundation is interested in funding the project. It is proposed that the images will be held in a locally-based digital rock art archive linked to ARTstor. This project will make the images available to a much wider audience.

RARI (Rock Art Research Institute) at Wits University is in the process of digitising all their rock art collections. They have the best digitising equipment in the southern hemisphere and have offered their equipment and expertise to the Natal Museum and other institutions as part of the SARADA proposal. The Natal Museum's rock art slide collection alone consists of more than 9000 slides (and growing by the day). Not to mention our valuable collection of facsimile copies made by Patricia Vinnicombe and others that will also benefit from the SARADA proposal. Each institution contributing to SARADA will retain control of reproduction rights and can define restrictions of access to their own collections. It seems the Natal Museum has been given a gracious hand to take a step into the future.

### Notes from Northumberland: floored by rock carvings by Aron Mazel<sup>1</sup>

On 10 December 2002, I accompanied Stan Beckensall, doyen of British rock art, to a Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) media event at Chatton Park Hill in northern Northumberland. The event had been arranged by Defra to publicise the placing under stewardship, with their financial support, of a piece of farmland with rock carvings. The farmer was required to remove cattle from the area to alleviate pressure on the carvings and to make sites accessible to the general public, especially school children. I understand that Defra's keenness to support this and similar projects is in part informed by its desire to repair its

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tarnished reputation in these parts following its rather ineffective handling of the 2001 foot-and-mouth outbreak.

The media event took place on an exposed hilltop in sub-zero conditions with the snow-capped Cheviots visible to the west and a bitter, biting, howling wind gusting in from the Urals—yes, the Urals in Russia—to the east. But, let me not digress, Defra and the cold are but side issues.

Following the radio and television interviews and numerous photographs (of Stan not me, of course) Stan and I decided to utilise what was left of the afternoon productively (with sunset being at 15:30) by locating and plotting other carved outcrops and rocks in the vicinity, using the fancy new Garmin GPS 12 and Nikon Coolpix E4500 digital camera that form an essential part of my fieldwork kit nowadays. How I would have loved to have had a GPS when I was traipsing around the uKhahlamba/Drakensberg recording rock art in the 1970s and 1980s, or better still that some of the people whose sites I spent hours looking for had had GPS's when they did their recording! How much simpler it would have been!



After visiting and recording some arguably pretty ordinary carvings on Chatton Park Hill, except for the main Chatton site where the media event happened (see left), we decided that there was sufficient time for Stan to show me the recently discovered Ketley Crag Rock Shelter. Up until then I had seen about 60 carved rocks in Northumberland, including some excellent examples such as the main rocks at Lordenshaw and Old Bewick, but I was still warming up to

the 'cups and rings', as British rock art is generally known, and nothing that I had seen had fired my imagination and really wowed me.

Ketley Crag changed that. A small, inauspicious, rock shelter perched on the side of a hill overlooking Lyham Burn, which flows into the River Till, the entire floor has been carved in abstract forms with an artificial channel running through the centre (see next page). In themselves, the motifs are not dissimilar to what I had already seen at other sites, but the experience of seeing the entire floor of a rock shelter carved made an instant, and deep, impression on me. It was one of those moving, hair-standing-on-end moments that archaeologists occasionally experience during their careers. This is a powerful place. In an instant my outlook changed. The abstract and geometric carvings of Northumberland may lack the colour, detail, layering and vibrancy of uKhahlamba/Drakensberg rock paintings, but they are special none the less. And, they have a mysterious story to tell, having been made between 6000 and 4000 years ago by Neolithic and/or Bronze Age people. Exactly why they were carved and when no one knows and the perennial problem of not being able to date rock art accurately is as much a problem in Northumberland as it is in the uKhahlamba/Drakensberg.

Having read the above account, some might wonder what I am doing in Northumberland locating and recording cups and rings. In short, I have a two and a half year Research Associate position in the School of Historical Studies at the University of Newcastle to do a rock art project entitled: *Web Access to Rock Art: the Beckensall Archive of Northumberland Rock Art*.





*Floor of Ketley Crag Shelter*

In some ways the Northumberland project is the cyberspace version of the project I did in the uKhahlamba/Drakensberg in the 1970s and 1980s. It's amazing how life goes in circles. And, who knows where it will take me this time?

## **SNIPPETS**

### **Southern African Humanities**

The 2002 edition (volume 14) of the Natal Museum journal of human sciences is out and contains a range of papers. The abstracts are posted on the museum web site ([www.nmsa.org.za](http://www.nmsa.org.za)). Contact the museum librarian if you wish to purchase the journal. The cost is R100. For those who do not have access to the internet, the papers are:

HUFFMAN, T. N. – Regionality in the Iron Age: the case of the Sotho-Tswana

OHINATA, F. – The beginning of 'Tsonga' archaeology: excavations at Simunye, north-eastern Swaziland

PLUG, I. – Faunal remains from Mzinyashana, a Later Stone Age site in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

HOBART, J., MITCHELL, P. & COOTE, J. – A rock art pioneer: Louis E. Tylor, and previously undescribed painted rock fragments from Natal, South Africa

PAPINI, R. – The Nazareth Scotch: dance uniform as admonitory infrapolitics for an eikonic Zion City in early Union Natal

## Pics on the web

Good colour photographs of the painted rocks described by John Hobart, Peter Mitchell and Jeremy Coote in their paper in *Southern African Humanities* are available for viewing at the web site [www.prm.ox.ac.uk/tylorimages](http://www.prm.ox.ac.uk/tylorimages).

## New books

Strongly recommended new books are *The mind in the cave* by David Lewis-Williams of Wits University on the origin of the Palaeolithic cave art of Western Europe, and *The archaeology of southern Africa* by Peter Mitchell of Oxford University. Peter's book provides an excellent and thorough overview of southern African archaeology. Its first print run South Africa was apparently sold out by late February 2003 (the book became available late in 2002).

## Places to visit by Val Ward

During August 2002 an English friend, Barbara Cant, and I travelled through a large part of South Africa. We viewed elephants, whales, flowers, fossils and we visited friends, old family farms, churches and graveyards. Now I am not going into detail. I thought I would note 'museums' worth visiting when members are in the relevant areas.

Top of the list is the **West Coast Fossil site** at Langebaanweg. Chrissie Sievers told us about this site at the End of Year function at Mike and Audrey Moon's home last year. A slide presentation and guided tour takes place at 11.30 am every day except Christmas Day.

Barbara and I visited it a couple of weeks ago and revelled in the presentation. Hans, who lead the tour, is an excellent people person – amusing, informative and thoroughly enthusiastic. Seeing the 5 million year old bed of fossilized Sivatheres and hearing of the sabre-toothed cat and the massive bear was exciting. Afterwards we were able to pick out fossils from the sieve. I found a little microfauna toe bone but Barbara was very disappointed not to find anything.

The site is about 120 km from Cape Town and we included a visit to the flowers at Postberg on our day trip out of Cape Town.

Next is the **Wildebeestkuil** rock engraving site only 10 minutes from the centre of Kimberley on the Barkly East road. This recently opened site has an interpretive centre where an excellent introductory video is screened. It was good to recognise friends – David Lewis-Williams, Janette Deacon, David Morris and Peter Beaumont among others, having their say. Then there is a very well produced audio tape which one can listen to as one walks around the site. Henry Cele (ex Shaka Zulu) put lots of mood into his narration as one follows the path and board walk over the engraved rocks. The range of depictions of animals and geometric designs is quite staggering.

Also in Kimberley is the **William Humphreys Art Gallery**. Well I thought the Tatham in PMB was the best but I gasped as I walked towards the first gallery in WHAG. It really is quite stunning. The Ancestors section of the **McGregor Museum** is also worth a visit.

**District Six Museum** in Buitenkant Street in Cape Town is still my favourite small museum. The events of the past are presented without any hostility. I am moved at every visit to this museum. This time I listened to a guide who had been brought up in District Six. Afterwards I asked him if he had known the Mazels. Indeed he had and we talked about Aron's family and Aron's recent past. Noor Ebrahim knew that Aron's father had died recently and that Aron had left for the UK. My friend Barbara thought it most interesting.

In Kingwilliamstown is Steve Biko's grave – very easy to find in the cemetery on the edge of town.

Not to be outdone is the exciting **Sciencentre** at Century City in Milnerton, Cape Town. The Sciencentre hosted a Royal Society meeting to which we were invited and we took the opportunity to look around the centre itself. It has an amazing array of hands on (and foot in)

things to play with. Great fun and informative. Be warned, signage is not good and we had to ask for directions.

I leave out Two Oceans Aquarium, Robben Island, Kimberley Mine Museum, Bo-Kaap (which has a wonderful photographic section), South African National Gallery and South African Museum, the Congo Caves and its interpretive centre and the little country museums because most are well known and would be visited anyway. There is lots to see in our country.

### **Agenda for Natal Branch AGM, Hillcrest, 23 April 2003**

1. Welcome
2. Apologies
3. Minutes of AGM of 18.04.2002
4. Matters arising from minutes
5. Chairperson's report
6. Treasurer's report
7. Gnews Editor's report
8. Election of 2003 Branch Committee: Nominees are Penny Letley Honorary Secretary. Adrian Flett Honorary Treasurer, Mary Furnival, Mick Gregory, Rodney Maud, Mike Moon, Annie van de Venter and Louise van Heerden. Gavin Whitelaw, Gnews Editor and the outgoing Chairperson, remains on the committee as an *ex officio* member
9. Any other business
10. Closure

### **Minutes of the Natal Branch AGM, Pietermaritzburg, 18 April 2002**

PRESENT: 21 members, 6 guests.

1. APOLOGIES: John and Margaret Cooke, Jenny Gregory, Miffy Jenner, Tim and Helen McClurg, Marie Scott-Macnab, Ooma Rambilass, Cath and Alan Turner.
2. WELCOME. The Chairperson, Mick Gregory, welcomed those present.
3. MINUTES. The minutes of the AGM held on 19<sup>th</sup> April 2001 had previously been distributed. Pieter Wessels proposed acceptance of the minutes and was seconded by Rodney Maud.
4. MATTERS ARISING. There were no matters arising.
5. CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT. The Chairperson's report was distributed and read. Acceptance of the report was proposed by Pieter Wessels and seconded by Adrian Flett.
6. TREASURER'S REPORT. Jillian Wessels presented the Annual Financial Statements. Total funds available are R6 565.89 (down by R1 129.25 from 2000). General expenses for 2001 were lower than in 2000. Poster sales, donations and excursion levies brought in extra income. To reduce bank charges incurred through frequent transactions, Gavin and Chrissie kept floats. The airfares of two speakers (R1 830) were financed by funds from the fixed deposit account. The success of the sales of cards will be registered in the forthcoming financial year.
7. EDITOR'S REPORT. Gavin Whitelaw, editor of Gnews, apologized that both 2001 issues of Gnews had been late. He thanked members, especially Chrissie, for their contributions. A vote of thanks was proposed to Gavin by Rodney Maud and seconded by Jillian Wessels.
8. ELECTION OF COMMITTEE. Committee nominations are Adrian Flett (Assistant Treasurer), Mary Furnival, Miffy Jenner (Honorary Treasurer), Rodney Maud, Mike Moon, Chrissie Sievers (Honorary Secretary), Annie van de Venter and Gavin Whitelaw (Gnews Editor). Val Ward proposed the election of the committee *en bloc*. This proposal was approved unanimously. The out-going Chairperson Mick Gregory remained on the committee as an *ex officio* member.

9. GENERAL.

10. There was no other business. The meeting closed at 18:32.

### **Agenda for SA Archaeological Society AGM, Johannesburg, 15 May 2003**

1. Welcome
2. Apologies
3. Confirmation of Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 14 May 2002
4. Secretary's Report
5. Treasurer's Report
6. Any other business

### **Teaser for the next *Gnews***

In the next newsletter I will try and provide information on these extraordinary stone walled sites (below) in the Mandara Mountains in northern Cameroon. They are currently the subject of investigation by Nic David and Judy Sterner of the Mandara Archaeological Project, University of Calgary, Canada. According to Nic, the Mafa who live and farm in the area say that the structures were there when they arrived and that they were built by an iron-using people they call *ndo day*, slave-hunters and cannibals who operated in military formations. The Mafa do not build in the same way and the sites are not incorporated into their political and ceremonial life.



The east end of the Kova-Mondossa ruin  
sketched by C. Seignobos (1982:43).