EDITORIAL

The Newsletter was started in 1978 with a view to providing interesting matter to our non-specialist members, who form 90% of the Society. Many of them may find the specialist articles in the Bulletin rather abstruse, and though they continue to subscribe in order to support archaeology in South Africa, we ought to do more for them. In 1980 Council decided to increase the financial allocation for the Newsletter, which could now total 12 pages.

The Editor, however, is experiencing difficulty in amassing material for the Newsletter, and he addresses this urgent appeal both to professional archaeologists and to non-specialist members of the Society. He does not want the whole Newsletter to be written by himself and his colleagues in Natal, but to make it cover a wide field. He is inserting reviews of recent archaeological articles from all over the world; this policy was initiated by Professor Goodwin in the early days of the Bulletin, but such material has recently been crowded out. These articles are in journals accessible in the university or public libraries of our large cities.

To specialists he would appeal to send summaries of their recent publications and current researches. He refuses to accept the excuse of lack of time. If one’s material is at fingers’ ends, it is easy to compose a short and popular summary of one or two pages in a couple of hours. There has been discussion recently in America that scientists must emerge from their ivory towers and explain shortly to the intelligent public what they are doing and what the taxpayer is paying for. This attitude is valid here; our members want a lucid account of the researches which are being published in the Bulletin or elsewhere in a form difficult for them to appreciate.

To our non-specialist members the Editor appeals for notes on what they have seen, rock-art, iron-age and stone-age sites etc. If the sites are little known, he will gladly publish such notes. They should be factual and avoid unprovable theories. Indian-ink drawings and black-and-white photographs would be welcome; coloured photographs cannot be used. So please send whatever you can to Dr. Oliver Davies, Natal Museum, Loop Street, Pietermaritzburg 3201.
AN ARCHAEOLOGIST IN SOUTHERN NAMIBIA

Christine Sievers

The beginning of 1980 heralded a breakthrough in the sponsorship of archaeological research in southern Africa, when a chance meeting between Mr. George Christodoulou, chairman of Dimacor Diamond Mining Company, and myself, led to the employment of an archaeologist by a private geological concern. To my knowledge this is the first time an archaeologist has been employed by a geological company to pursue archaeological research exclusively, and forms a laudable development in the advancement of local archaeology.

The archaeologist is of no direct economic benefit to the company. On the other hand the company provides a range of conveniences for the archaeologist, such as transport varying from a helicopter, through 4-wheel drive vehicles to off-road motorcycles, on hand geological advice, maps, aerial photographs and the facilities of a well-equipped office.

The concession area of the company covers a large part of southern Namibia, extending from the sand dunes along the boundary of the Diamond Area in the west, to the harsh country of the Fish River Canyon in the east. Across this area archaeological remains are plentiful, varied and easily found due to the lack of dense vegetation cover. This in itself can be disadvantageous as it promotes erosion, destruction of sites and dispersal and mixing of material.

Large handaxes, cores and scrapers are to be found on slopes and valleys littered with quartzite boulders, while on higher vantage points are industries of blade and sometimes microlithic proportions. Natural shelters are not numerous, but invariably have associated archaeological remains, either on the shelter floors or on scree slopes below them. Situated against the protection of ridges and mountains slopes are stone circles, one to three metres in diameter, accompanied by microlithic remains and more recent debris such as iron and rubber. Much ostrich eggshell and sometimes pottery of non-Bantu origins is found associated with the circles and in shelters. Glass beads and iron implements are present but less frequent. Stone features, other than circles and small kid-pens, include unstylized burial mounds, game pits and game fences.

Often unaccompanied by other visible cultural remains, the stone structures can pose dating problems. It is difficult to distinguish structures made by Nama shepherds employed by local white farmers from those constructed by their forebears who inhabited southern Namibia before foreigners colonized the area.

Along the banks of the Orange and lower Fish Rivers, scattered pastoralist families still wander with their privately owned herds of goats, a few pieces of corrugated iron, reed mats and scant household possessions. The continuation through time of this nomadic existence and particular aspects of a pastoralist way of life, provides an interesting subject for ethnoarchaeology.

The most spectacular finds of the area are rock-engravings executed on black limestone. Some of the magnificent examples of this art are naturalistic representations of animals, amongst others, elephant, zebra, giraffe and ostrich. Human figures, slightly more
stylized, have also been delicately portrayed. Most numerous amongst the engravings are apparently abstract groupings of wandering lines, loops and circles. The engravings are often directly alongside game-paths which are still regularly used by mountain zebra, kudu, gemsbok, springbok, ostrich and baboons. The archaeologist is often accompanied by baboons, barking harshly from a discreet distance. Ever present dangers in the field are poisonous snakes and scorpions and the reclusive mountain leopard. Leopards are still trapped or shot in the inaccessible Fish River environs but I have not yet encountered one in the flesh or engraved on limestone.

The various birds and beasts of southern Namibia, the harsh natural beauty of the countryside, the interesting and often rare flora and the abundant and exciting archaeological remains, outweigh the discomfort caused by the intense summer heat and dry sandy winds. Fortunately, living arrangements are far from unpleasant. Pioneering efforts by the geologists involve colonization of abandoned farmhouses, laying-on of water and other essentials (involving digging of non-archaeological pits) and the establishment of connections to obtain milk, eggs and meat. All this rather in the styles of the early wealthy archaeologists of the northern hemisphere, and certainly more than pleasant for an archaeologist in the isolated semi-desert of southern Namibia.

THE PERIPLUS OF HANNO

Oliver Davies

This short document purports to be a Greek translation of a Punic inscription set up at Carthage to commemorate a voyage of Hanno down the Atlantic coast of Africa. It consists of two parts, a short account of five colonies founded in Atlantic Morocco and a voyage into fairyland, supposedly as far as the Cameroons. The Greek text can be dated not later than 280 B.C.; guesses as to the date of the original voyage reach back to 700 B.C.

Since the Renaissance scholars have done their best to accept texts transmitted from antiquity, and have condemned nothing as a forgery unless it contains obvious anachronisms. Yet, before the days of printing, forged documents and misattributions were common; one has only to think of the book of Daniel, the minor Homeric poems, the letters of Phalaris exposed by Bentley, the Geography of Scylax which is relevant to the present note, to say nothing of numerous lives of saints and documents forged by medieval monks. Motives of forgery were prestige for some political policy, edification of worshippers, monetary advantage, carelessness of librarians etc.; also it was a normal item of Late Greek education to compose imaginary speeches by national heroes to suit crises in their lives.

Hanno's account has therefore been widely accepted by modern scholars, who have exercised themselves in solving contradictions with other ancient sources and in locating the places alleged to have been visited in West Africa. An attractive and romantic account of ancient West Africa was published thirty years ago by Carcopino ("Le Maroc antique"). Such books have influenced writers of text-books on African history, into which Hanno has regularly infiltrated.
The latest study of Hanno is by J. Ramin, published in 1976 as British Archaeology Report S3. The text is in French and English, which is fortunate as in these days of international contact academics seem less and less able to read foreign languages; a translation of Hanno's Periplus is appended. Ramin supports the genuineness of Hanno's voyage, and wriggles out of difficulties by assuming identical names of different places and shifts of place-names, and by making unscrupulous identifications based on vague resemblances of place-names; he uses all the juggling to which previous students of Hanno have been prone. He avoids the trap of identifying Hanno's gorillas with the mammal we know by that name, but suggests that they were "large apes, orang-utangs for instance", despite this being an Indonesian primate. Ramin conscientiously examines the confused accounts of North-west Africa in Greek and Roman authors, without evaluating them and considering how frequently one copied another without independent control; an author such as Pliny has no greater value than that of the pot-pourri of sources which he quotes. Ramin even suggests that Avienus, a Latin poet of the IV century A.D., used Punic sources, though the Punic language was probably extinct in North Africa by that time; he is usually supposed to have used a Greek account of the VI century B.C. of a voyage as far as Britain and perhaps to Norway.

Ramin also uses many modern works, mostly those in French. His archaeological knowledge is less good. He fails to realize that the Punic settlement at Mogador was abandoned before 500 B.C. He cites the Trajanic coin found at Matadi as possible support for Hanno's voyage to the Camerons, though Mauny has demonstrated that it is one of a very few Roman objects which was brought to Africa since the XVI century A.D. He quotes the large cemetery at Tintane in Mauritania as evidence for a town about 500 B.C., though nearly all the uncalibrated radiocarbon-dates are before 3000 B.P., the latest 2860 B.P., which in calendar-years would be about 1000 B.C. When he starts to theorize, he becomes even less acceptable. The idea that Hanno was exploring the possibilities of a sea-route to export copper from Akjoujt in Mauritania, gold from Bambouk in Eastern Senegal and tin from Nigeria, metals which he claims had previously been arriving overland, is improbable; all these places are far inland. Herodotus had heard of gold coming from somewhere in the Upper Niger or Faleme basins; there is no evidence that the other metals were reaching the Mediterranean in the I millennium B.C. Ramin considers the suggested localization of Hanno's legendary Cerne either at Hern behind Villa Cisneros in Spanish Sahara or at Arquin in Northern Mauritania. The name is first recorded by Ephorus in the mid IV century B.C. and may be a memory of the settlement at Mogador, long deserted. Ramin equates Hanno's River Lixos with the Draa in South Morocco, though the name is well attested for a town and river less than 100 km south of Tangier and the Draa was anciently called Darat. He flounders in deep water when he equates Soloeis with the modern Cap Cantin south of Casablanca.

R. Mauny, a very knowledgeable scholar on West Africa, in 1944 and 1955 rejected Hanno's Periplus as a forgery. His view was supported in a detailed criticism by Germain in an obscure Moroccan periodical (Hesperis, 44 (1957) 205), and I fully accepted it in 1967 ("West Africa before the Europeans", pp. 253-5). We can make nothing of the confusions and travellers' tales in Hanno's text, which are on a par with the fables of Aethicus Istricus and of Sir John Mandeville. The account is a Greek forgery of about 300 B.C., drawing to some extent on Herodotus, probably on Egyptian folk-tales, and perhaps on other tales which are no longer extant. Let Hanno disappear from our text-books and continued on page 6.
ROCK PAINTINGS NEAR CATHEDRAL PEAK.

Figure 1: 'The hunters of Hunters Rock'. A row of 6 hunters with barred penis's (2 bars) painted onto a boulder in the Cathedral Peak State Forest. They are well equipped carrying bows and quivers containing bichrome arrows. Such is the detail that the white cord is visible on the bow of the hunter second from the left and the bow of the one on the right. The scale is in centimetres.

Figure 2: 'Over my dead body'. An eland lying on its back (presumably dead) with fighting humans directly up from its belly, and further up to left another series of fighting humans. It is from a shelter in the Cathedral Peak State Forest; was traced by Steve Coetser and redrawn by Andrew Schofield. This scene is 60 centimetres long.

A.D. Mazel
cease to mislead teachers and students who have not the means to evaluate the original sources; or if some writer cannot refrain from quoting this text, let him at least add that its authenticity has been seriously impugned.
In *Current Anthropology* (February 1980) J.F. Epstein discusses a large number of pre-Columbian coins (mostly Roman) found in the United States, and concludes that none are genuine contemporary imports, indications of voyages from Europe across the Atlantic before Columbus. It is true that tales of mythical islands beyond the Atlantic were current in the middle ages, and it is just possible that the Portuguese, while learning how to return from West and South Africa, once or twice sailed so far west that they sighted the coast of South America. It is noticeable that of the commentators on Epstein's article, most of those in the academic world agree that all such coins are either recent imports and drops or are fraudulent; those not in the academic world are much more inclined to cranky theories about navigation to America in early days, and they carry with them the more interested but less critical public.

There is mention of a Viking coin found in properly conducted excavations in Maine (page 12). This is just where the Vikings may have got to, as Maine is about the farthest north that the Vinland of their sagas and the limit of the wild vine can be placed.

It is noteworthy that Mauny came to a similar conclusion with regard to Africa, whence there have been fewer people collecting antiquities from the Mediterranean world (*Libyca Archéologie Epigraphie* 4 (1956) pp 249-261). He accepts as genuine a very few finds in the southern Sahara, especially along known caravan-routes; a few on the East African coast which was described in a Greek text of probably the I century A.D., the Periplus Maris Erythraei. Beyond these limits he rejects all claimed finds, from Guinea, Congo, Rhodesia, Natal, Pondoland, Madagascar. For none of these finds is the record satisfactory; all of them have probably been imported recently by European settlers and dropped or stolen locally. A dozen Roman coins were stolen from my house some ten years ago; I suppose that one day these will be dug up in some midden or in a native reserve near Pietermaritzburg, to provide fodder for a crank historian.

A report in *Nature* (vol. 284 no. 5751 pp 55-56) on the discovery of a human skull at Laetoli (Tanzania) and a discussion on pp 11-12 is of interest for the development of modern man in sub-Saharan Africa. The skull is dated on stratigraphical grounds to about 120000 years ago, and exhibits marked features of *Homo sapiens* along with some survivals from his archaic ancestor *Homo erectus*. The discussion mentions several other skulls from East Africa of roughly the same date which show similar transitional features though dating at this range is not very accurate at present; no mention is made of the Border Cave skull (Natal, Tongaland), which belongs to the same group.

**ROCK-PAINTING NEAR WESSELSBRON, ORANGE FREE STATE**

*Beryl Page*

In November 1979 a party from Johannesburg visited the farm Swaelkrans on the south bank of the River Vaal, in order to inspect a rock-painting which had been reported by Mrs. A. van der Merwe to Mrs. Sullivan. The river-level has fallen since the construction of Bloemhof Dam, and has left a line of sandstone cliffs along the foreshore. At a sharp bend there survives a rock-column about 10 m high with arch 3 m wide at the top of the cliffs (27°26' CA, at point 4088, 27°34' S 26°09' E). Near continued on back page.
On paging through old documents in our departmental files, we came across some photographs showing General J.C. Smuts at Mapungubwe. The photographs were taken during an early phase of the excavation on Mapungubwe, probably during June or July 1934. The presence of the old General on Mapungubwe, however, remains one of the Mapungubwe riddles yet to be solved.

A problem of a more practical nature is posed by the so-called “Smuts House”, a small, two roomed building situated on a sandstone ridge, overlooking the Limpopo River in the vicinity of Mapungubwe. Close to the house, on a cliff above the river bank, a special seat has been built and walled in. The view from here is something magnificent. It is said that General Smuts used this seat as a quiet resting place and lookout point. Both the “Smuts House” and the Mapungubwe archaeological site are on the state-owned farm Greefswald which is controlled by the South African Defence Force. Conservation-minded senior officers of the Defence Force are at present interested in having the little house declared as a national monument. Unfortunately we are not sure whether the “Smuts House” was actually Smuts’ house.

The discovery of human skeletons and gold objects on Mapungubwe Hill, on New Year’s eve 1932, caused a ripple of interest in government circles. In fact, the Prime Minister at the time, General J.B.M. Hertzog, regarded the research on Mapungubwe as “a matter of national importance”. In June 1933 the Government bought Greefswald, granted the University of Pretoria excavation rights and even provided financial support for the excavation work. The financial support was undertaken by the Department of the Interior, headed by Minister J.H. Hofmeyr. The Minister constituted the Archaeological Committee of the University of Pretoria, on which the Government was to be represented by Professor C. van Riet Lowe and Mr. J.H. de Wet. The Committee was in charge of the archaeological research on Greefswald. General Smuts apparently did not come into the picture at all. A likely conclusion, therefore, is that General Smuts was not involved at Greefswald in any official capacity.

On the other hand, General Smuts, who was the political leader of the Opposition at the time of the Mapungubwe finds, showed the keenest interest in these discoveries. His interest was proved beyond any doubt by his visit (or visits?) to Mapungubwe, which in those days must have amounted to a perilous journey in a rough, desolate and malaria-infested area.

The General’s presence on Greefswald may be explained by his friendship with Dr. I. Pole-Evans, the Chief of the Division of Plant Industry of the Department of Agriculture in the Union of South Africa. Prof. R.J. Mason recalls that General Smuts assisted Pole-Evans with the establishment of the Dongola Botanical Reserve, some distance to the south of Greefswald. Pole-Evans was also responsible for the botanical identification of carbonized seeds from the Mapungubwe deposits. It is quite possible that Pole-Evans was accompanied by General Smuts, a keen botanist himself, during some of Pole-Evans’ visits to Mapungubwe. It is said that Pole-Evans had a hut in the area - one wonders if this hut could be the so-called “Smuts House”?
A species of wild fig tree in the area used to be called Ficus smutsii. An example of this species grows within the cleft which is the western ascent to Mapungubwe Hill itself. A photograph of this particular tree is shown in Palmer and Pitman’s “Trees of Southern Africa” p. 476.

Unless more substantial evidence with reference to General Smuts’ presence in Greefswald comes to light, we are left with the shaky conclusion that the General had no official connection with the archaeological work at Mapungubwe, that his visit (or visits?) to Mapungubwe was merely a matter of personal interest; and that he could have stayed in the “Smuts House” during such a visit. Any information that can cast a ray of light on this part of the history of Greefswald will be enthusiastically received at the Department of Archaeology, University of Pretoria.
THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS

Shortly after the war great excitement was aroused by the discovery in caves above the western shore of the Dead Sea of a number of texts, some of books of the Old Testament in a considerably older version than our existing manuscripts, and some of documents which were otherwise unknown. They were associated with the ruins of a building on the plain called Khirbet Qumran, which was considered to be an Essene monastery; the texts were thought to have been hidden at a time when the Roman army, after the capture of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, was mopping up resistance in the Jordan valley.

However, difficulties began to accrue as the whole question was more carefully studied. The cemetery of Khirbet Qumran was found to contain women as well as men, which did not fit the account in Pliny of the Essenes as a celibate brotherhood. The brick tables, discovered in excavations and thought to have stood in a writing room in the settlement, were shown to have been most inconvenient for copying manuscripts, and no evidence turned up of scribal activity.

A few years later there was found a text inscribed on a sheet of copper, indicating its importance. This text, when after great difficulty it was unrolled, was found to be an inventory of precious objects hidden in caves near the Dead Sea. It seemed unlikely that such treasures would have belonged to an Essene community, which practised poverty.

In a recent number of the Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society (vol, 124 i (1980) p 1 - 24) Professor Norman Golb of the University of Chicago analyses all the difficulties in assuming that the Dead Sea Scrolls were copied by an Essene community at Khirbet Qumran, and puts forward a different and very plausible hypothesis. The Jewish revolt had started several years before the capture of Jerusalem. It was not until A.D. 67 that the Roman government decided to take the matter seriously and appointed Vespasian as commander of a large army to suppress the Jews by fire and sword. The anarchy at Rome in A.D. 68-69, with a succession of four emperors and continuing civil war, Vespasian's proclamation in July 69 and the ultimate victory over the last of his rivals near the end of the year had seriously hampered the campaign in Judea; so though the Romans had overrun the northern and western parts of Palestine, they did not close in on Jerusalem until the spring of A.D. 70. The Jews in Jerusalem had therefore time to remove many of the treasures of the Temple, and as the routes towards the Jordan were still open, to conceal them near the Dead Sea. The manuscripts which have been recovered were therefore probably part of the store from Jerusalem, and not associated with an Essene monastery which was not at Khirbet Qumran but on some site not yet identified.

The treasures which were concealed have not been found. The copper scroll which we possess was not the sole copy of the inventory, so many valuable pieces may have been secretly recovered after Palestine was pacified, or indeed in the major revolt in the second century. It is most unlikely that the Romans ever laid their hands on anything. We should almost certainly have heard of the recovery of concealed treasures, and they might have been recorded, along with the Seven-branched Candlestick and other loot from the Temple, on the Arch of Titus at Rome.
This monograph, incorporating the results of the author's doctoral research in the lower Vaal area, is, in most respects, a disappointment. The data base is not only rather thin, but is not always factually correct. It is surprising that, in a work of such ambitious scope, few detailed or synthetic geomorphological maps are presented and only a small selection of the many available stratigraphic sections are reproduced.

Errors and omissions which adversely affect the validity of the analyses are numerous, and cannot be discussed exhaustively in a brief review. Among the more serious are a failure to take sufficient account of particle morphometry in assessing the origin and alluvial history of the various gravel deposits, and a tendency to confuse landforms and deposits produced by alluvial and colluvial processes. The latter has, among other things, led to a misunderstanding of the extent to which the various gravels have accumulated through the weathering of nearby occurrences of Dwyka tillite.

Even more contentious is the correlation of a large number of fossils of dubious provenance with the +20m ('Wedburg') terrace gravels, which leads to an age estimate for these deposits in conflict with their recorded content of Acheulian artefacts. Nor can long-range correlations between the Ghaap escarpment and the Vaal gravels be accepted, particularly in view of the fact the Helgren's 'tufas', which he records as interfingering with alluvial deposits at the Vaal-Harts confluence, are in reality calcrites which bear little resemblance to the Ghaap tufas. Palaeoenvironmental conclusions based on such tenuous comparisons are, at best, dubious, and are made more so by the lack of general acceptance of K.W. Butzer's climatic sequence for the Ghaap escarpment.

The contribution of Cainozoic warping along the Griqualand-Transvaal axis to terrace formation is rejected by Helgren, despite the recent findings of T. Stratten, who presents good field evidence for the beheading of gravel bearing tributaries of the Vaal in the western Transvaal and south-eastern Botswana through this movement. Nor is incision and nickpoint recession within the Karoo filling of the fossil valley of the lower Vaal given due consideration as a possible explanation of certain of these features; headward erosion within Karoo sediments is, in fact one of the more common mechanisms of terrace formation in the semi-arid interior of South Africa.

Acceptable conclusions can hardly be expected in view of these analytical difficulties. But matters are still further complicated by Helgren's correlation of similar depositional successions within the younger alluvial fills comprising his 'Rietputs' and 'Riverton' formations. These correlations link several widely separated localities along the Vaal and are even extended to the Harts and Riet river valleys; together they form the basis of Helgren's palaeoenvironmental reconstructions. Similar alluvial sequences of widely differing age are common in the South African landscape, but are more often the result of the well-documented cyclic pattern of fluctuating river discharge in semi-arid areas, than of long-term climatic change. Such sequences are often repetitive rather than synchronous, and to attempt to date...
them by analogy seems, therefore, to be futile; in any case, as Helgren himself points out, there is a dearth of material suitable for the isotopic dating of individual sections, and real dangers of contamination exist in this kind of deposit.

The final synthesis interprets the accumulated data in terms of a number of rather simplistic alluvial environmental models; in view of the reservations already expressed, these can hardly be regarded as an advance on C. van Riet Lowe's now discarded 'pluvial' chronology for these deposits.

Attention must finally be drawn to Helgren's surprising excursion into the field of landscape evolutionary models. The resulting denunciation of L.C. King is based neither on an accurate appreciation of his main propositions, nor on a sound body of confirmatory facts. While controversy exists over a number of King's views, continually accumulating field evidence from onshore measurement and offshore probing confirm the broad outlines of his sequence of sub-continental erosion cycles during the Cainozoic.

In particular, a widespread Oligocene hiatus in offshore deposition corresponds well with the terminal phase of the 'African' cycle, during which little sediment was produced because of the planation and consequent low relief of the continental interior. There is good evidence, too, of the extensive Tertiary uplifts (more than 300m in places) which gave rise to the 'Post-African' cycles. These cycles corresponded with notable marine transgressions.

Despite the coincidence of exhumed and subaerial landforms in some area, the lower Vaal basin fits well into this framework of landscape development and there is much evidence to indicate that the local terrace sequences evolved in response to well-defined structural, hydrological and tectonic influences. While it is sometimes difficult to unravel the interplay of these factors, this apparent complexity scarcely warrants recourse to a new geomorphological order, least of all by someone who is clearly unfamiliar with a significant part of the local evidence.

T.C. Partridge

continued from page 7.

the base of the column is a small grotto with entrance so narrow that only one person at a time can fit head and shoulders into it, and a very small hole from the side to the west face of the column permits the rays of the setting sun in November to illuminate a red-painted figure in the grotto.

![Figure](image)

The figure is fairly well preserved on the rough sandstone surface, but a rock-crack makes it difficult to judge the dimensions of the penis. It is 22 cm high with apparently an animal-mask, and is striding with body leaning forward. Both arms are outstretched. The right hand apparently holds a curved stick. Two coloured blobs below the end of the stick are probably natural. In front of the left arm and head is a bar, rather more faintly painted and not in connection with the human painting.

African sangomas at Soweto, when shown slides of the painting, interpreted it as a "lion-man", member of a secret brotherhood. This interpretation may be correct. It is interesting to find a painting in an area where the rock-art consists almost entirely of engravings; so it is not impossible that the painting was a Bantu work.