

Prehistory of Hwange National Park
Gary Haynes

Held on Wednesday 17 August 2002 at Rio Hotel, Matsheumhlope, Bulawayo.

Gary Haynes, a visiting researcher from the University of Nevada, Reno, USA, who has been associated with research in Hwange for over 20 years, gave an illustrated talk on Early, Middle and Late Stone Age sites and artefacts in Hwange National Park. This summary was based on his own archaeological and palaeo-environmental work, and that of a number of others whose research has been facilitated by him over the last 20 years.

After outlining the differences in stone tools from the different periods, Gary discussed what impact these peoples may have had on their environment. He covered the period right up to the break-away groups from the Rozwi empire and settlement sites associated with early colonial farmers in the Robins/Sinamatella areas.

The distribution of sites across Hwange is particularly concentrated in the north - the northern hills - and calcrete pans; much less with the waterless Kalahari sand areas.

Gary then went on to discuss the palaeo-environments of Hwange, particularly the linear dunes in the southern portion on Kalahari sand. These show good evidence for dry and wet periods over the last 100,000 years. He also mentioned some dendrochronology work that has been done, particularly on *Pterocarpus angolensis* that has been dated back 200 years. The variations in tree ring width show climatic fluctuations, but no clear pattern over this period. Few tree species show such clear rings. He discussed how these fluctuations may have affected human settlement and usage patterns.

Gary's book on the palaeo-environments of Hwange is currently under revision.