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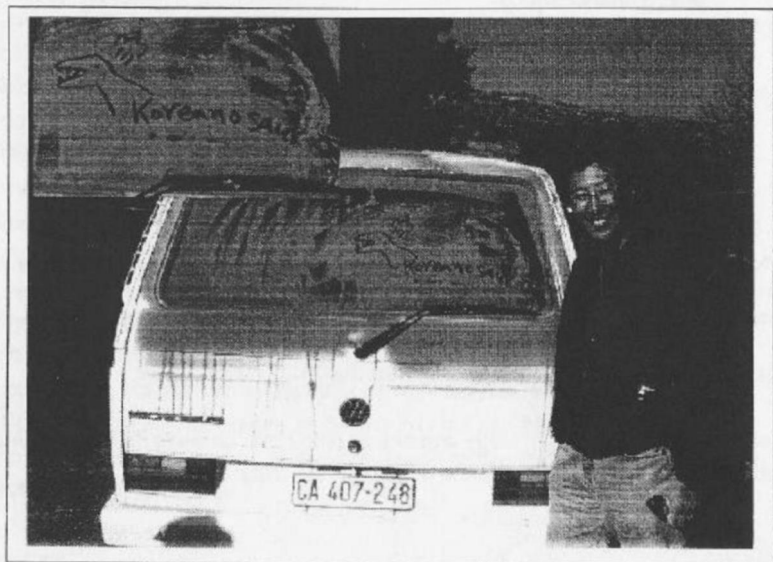
NEWS  
NUUS



Biannual newsletter of the Palaeontological Society of Southern Africa.  
Halfjaarlikse Nuusbrief van die Paleontologiese Vereniging van Suider Afrika.

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Editor: Johann Neveling (jneveling@geoscience.org.za) (Tel: 012 - 841 1388/ Fax: 012 - 841 1278)

Postal address: Council for Geoscience, Private Bag X112, Pretoria, 0001.

**Front cover:** So palaeontology and art do mix! Prof. In Sung Paik displaying a short-lived work called '*Koreanosaur*' (MTE, July 2003).

## FROM THE EDITOR

Hi everyone!

And welcome to the first edition of *PalNews* Volume 14! Judging from the slow (but steady) trickle of *PalNews* contributions received, I trust that everyone enjoyed a fantastic festive season and is already hard at work on numerous exiting endeavors of a palaeontological flavour.

The 12<sup>th</sup> PSSA conference held at Bloemfontein is still fresh in the memory and what an enjoyable conference it was! The conference organizers, James Brink and Lloyd Rossouw are to be commended for a very well-run and enjoyable conference. Well done guys! The Bloem conference was made all the more memorable by the small bit of PSSA-history that was created with the introduction of a new, but very historic, trophy. An absolute must-read is Mike Raath's contribution on page 10, giving the story and history behind the origin of this trophy.

On the subject of conferences, I would (already) like to draw your attention to the fact that *PSSA 2004* will run concurrent, and indeed be part of *Geocongress 2004*, to form a big conference called *Geoscience Africa*. This conference is going to be expensive though (in the region of R1000 for registration), BUT DO NOT PANIC! Bruce and the BPI team are already working on plans to keep the PSSA affordable and retain the close-knit, family feel of our conferences. They will circulate more information to PSSA members as soon as it becomes available.

Lastly, looking at the contributions for this volume, it is evident that our members have been active with various kinds of palaeontological research and education, sometimes in the face of very difficult circumstances. This vitality augers well for palaeo in South Africa...so keep chipping away at those rocks...and remember that next deadline for *PalNews* contributions is just around the corner.

Take care...

Johann

PALAEONTOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTHERN AFRICA  
12<sup>th</sup> BIENNIAL MEETING - BLOEMFONTEIN  
3-7 OCTOBER 2002

Minutes of the BGM:

**1. Apologies**

Julia Lee Thorpe, Gideon Groenewald, Jacques van Heerden.

**2. Minutes of previous BGM (Pretoria 2000)**

Accepted as a true reflection: Proposed: Juri van den Heever; Seconded: Marion Bamford

**3. Treasurer's Report**

\* Johann Welman presented the financial report. R19 000.00 of the proceeds are for the production of *Palaeontologia africana* from the last conference, from the French Embassy.

\* Bruce Rubidge suggested that some of the funds be used to subsidize senior members of PSSA to attend conferences.

\* Billy de Klerk suggested that students registration fees be subsidised up to 75% to attend the PSSA conferences.

\* Mike Raath asked if the society was getting the best interest rates available; we should consider putting some money into a thirty-two day call account and the rest where the rates are better.

\* The new committee should look into the financial matters.

Proposed: Mike Raath; Seconded: everyone.

\* Johann Welman was thanked for his years of service as Treasurer

**4. Election of New Committee**

\* Only one nomination for each post was received and all were accepted by the society:

**President:** Marion Bamford (BPI Palaeontology, Wits University)  
(incoming from Vice Presidency)

**Vice President:** Darryl de Ruiter (PURE, Wits University)

**Secretary:** Alain Renaut (BPI Palaeontology, Wits University)

**Treasurer:** Lloyd Rousseau (National Museum, Bloemfontein)

Editor Pal News: Johann Neveling (Council for Geoscience, Pretoria) (continuing).

\* If Darryl de Ruiter's contract expires before his term of office does the society will elect a new Vice President.

## 5. General

### 5a. Palaeotourism

\* A sub-committee for Palaeotourism was elected at the Pretoria Conference:

Bruce Rubidge (Wits University, Johannesburg)

Marion Duncan (Wits University, Johannesburg)

Colin Menter (Wits University, Johannesburg)

Pippa Haarhoff (South African Museum, Cape Town)

Gideon Groenewald (University of the North, Qwaqwa)

\* They have produced a *Palaeotourism Protocol* which has been circulated twice amongst members for comment and feed back. This document was re-circulated during the conference and Bruce Rubidge brought some of the articles to the attention of the PSSA members present at the meeting:

#### Article 1: General Guidelines for Palaeotourism in Southern Africa

Point 2: Members felt that the scientist cannot be held directly responsible for the behaviour of the tourists, rather the scientist should inform the tourists of the correct behaviour verbally and in writing. Any misdemeanour is then a criminal offence.

#### Article 2: Compilation and Management of a Register of Palaeontological Sites and Palaeontological Reserves

Point 2: Would be reconsidered with respect to the permit committee.

\* There is a difference between fossil sites on private land and on National Reserves where there already are field guides. Both kinds of guides need formal training.

\* Sites need to be assessed for infrastructure and maintenance. Bruce

will liaise with SAHRA and the Archaeology Society about their minimum standards required.

- \* Registration of sites for tourism is necessary so that research sites are not plundered, destroyed or made inaccessible to researchers.

Point 5: This was thought to be a heavy handed approach and should be reworded.

#### Article 3: Accreditation by the PSSA

- \* Billy de Klerk has a list of palaeontological consultants and he will liaise with Mary Leslie/SAHRA.

- \* We need to have accreditation for Field Guides and Tour Guides, Training Courses, and liaise with SAQUA for registration.

- \* Perhaps we should consider site-specific accreditation.

#### Article 4: Administration and Monitoring of Palaeotourism

Points 1 and 8 need to be checked. Bruce will see to this.

#### Article 5: Code of Ethics for Landowners of Palaeontological Sites

- \* This is heavy handed and we should be educating people about the legislation.

- \* The PSSA should be seen to be sharing information and work with SAHRA for better registration, management and policy development.

#### Summary:

- \* Bruce will make the changes suggested and re-circulate the document within three weeks time. Then it can go to SAHRA for comment.

- \* All members of the previous committee were re-elected unanimously.

- \* Johann Welman wants all the landowners to be consulted.

#### **5b Education sub-committee**

- \* Ian McKay said that we are at a crucial stage in the schools' curriculum development because now they are trying to introduce evolution and palaeontology into Grades 10, 11, and 12. The new curricula will be available for public assessment this month. There have already been problems with fundamentalists and some religious groups not wanting evolution to be

taught. Now is also the time to produce teaching materials for pupils and teachers.

Sub- Committee elected:

Ian McKay (chairman)

Juri van den Heever

Pippa Haarhoff

\* Billy de Klerk also asked Ian to set up an e-mail chat group to discuss the issues on a regular basis.

**5c. Bob Brain's Fun Prize**

\* Bob and Laura Brain would like to donate a prize at each PSSA conference to the person who shows the most enjoyment and fun in their research. With today's pressures to publish, less time available, etc., they would like to encourage research for the sheer enjoyment of it. They will also make available a prize of R1 000 for the winner, or to be shared amongst the winners. Proposal accepted by everyone.

**5d. Harrismith Dongas Mug Prize**

\* Mike Raath: Rupert Wild found an old battered pewter mug in the Harrismith dongas during the 1986 PSSA field excursion which he had restored in Germany. The mug was from the Royal Artillery Canteen, possibly Boer War age, and was offered to the Harrismith Town Council in return for preserving the dongas which are used as the town's refuse dump. The Council was not interested so Rupert Wild suggested that the mug be used as a trophy for the PSSA conference and be called the James Kitching Award.

\* Permission will have to be sought from Prof Kitching to use his name. The members of PSSA decided that the mug will be awarded for the best overall presentation at each PSSA, starting with this one.

\* Mary Leslie said that because the mug was more than 75 years old it would have to be registered with SAHRA.

**5e. Databases on the Web**

\* Mike Raath is about to put BPT's catalogues on the web but wants feed back, suggestions and possibly collaboration from other members. Mike

said that it would be unwise to put locality details on the web because of the risk of illegal collecting or damage to the fossils

- \* Mary Leslie said that SAHRA would eventually need such a database and requested that Mike make contact with David Howe who will be starting their database.

- \* Billy said that the Web would be a good source for palaeontological information for South African schools and teachers. He has several sites linked to the PSSA web page already.

#### **5f. Other business**

- \* Mary Leslie has handed out documents on the Code of Ethics for Archaeology contract and environmental assessments which we should read and modify for Palaeontology. These must get to SAHRA by December for the Council meeting.

- \* The PSSA must write letters to SAHRA and relevant ministers to resolve the problems of permitting: permitting will come down to provincial level but only KZN has set up their PRHA. As most palaeontological research is not limited to one site we must motivate to have permitting for palaeontological research and collecting to be done at a national level through SAHRA rather than the provincial level.

- \* Alain Renaut suggested that a student representative be elected to serve on the PSSA committee and help to encourage student participation in the society and in palaeontology in general.

- \* The in-coming Committee will deal with this.

#### **5g. Venue for next Conference**

- \* Bruce Rubidge offered to host the next conference at BPI, Johannesburg, to run concurrently with the Geological Society Conference and Wits Geology/ School of Geosciences 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, July 2004.

- \* Pippa Haarhoff has offered Langebaanweg as the next venue.

- \* It was decided that if the PSSA conference can maintain its intimacy and cheap rates (Geol. Soc. is very expensive, approx R1 000), the conference would be at Wits, mid 2004. The following meeting in 2006 could be at Langebaanweg.

... The meeting was closed at 5pm.

**AWARDS MADE AT THE FORMAL DINNER:**

***Lystrosaurus* Award for the Best Poster:**

J.H. van den Worm & J.A. van den Heever: Pliocene lizards from the West Coast Fossil Park, Langebaanweg.

**The Boot Prize for the Biggest Liar:**

Francis Thackeray & Jose de Braga: Poster - A skeleton for Mrs/Mr Ples.

**The Shield for the Best Student Oral Presentation:**

Robyn Pickering (BPI, Wits University): The stratigraphy of the Peabody Chamber Gladysvale Cave: key to understanding sequence within cyclic cave fills. (With Hancox, P.J., La Cruz, R. and Berger, R.L.)

**The Harrismith Mug for Best Overall Presentation:**

Rose Adendorff (BPI, Wits University): *Hirsutem intermittens*: a re-interpretation of an enigmatic ovulate glossopterid fructification. (With M. Bamford).



### THE PSSA HAS A NEW TROPHY...AND A NEW WINNER!

At the BGM held in Bloemfontein on 5 October 2002, a new trophy was inaugurated for PSSA Conferences. This is a trophy with a difference - and with a history. The story goes back 16 years, and then some ...

Back in 1986, a contingent from the BPI-Palaeontology at Wits University set out from Johannesburg bound for the PSSA meeting to be held that September in Cape Town. Aboard the kombis and cars were BPI staff and students, and two visiting scientists from Europe: Prof Armand de Ricqlès from Paris, and Dr Rupert Wild from Stuttgart. On the way down to Cape Town the party stopped at several localities to show our students and visitors fossils in the field. One of those stops was in Harrismith, where Prof James Kitching introduced them to the world-famous Harrismith Dongas - a much-visited *Lystrosaurus* Zone locality which has yielded a rich haul of fossils over the years to many a visiting party of palaeontologists from all over the world. It is also the type locality of several tetrapod taxa, and the BPI collections alone contain at least 200 specimens that have come from this general locality.

As a member of that party myself, I can remember only too clearly our sense of outrage and frustration when we saw this important fossil site covered in town garbage, from old motor car tyres and rusting car bodies, to household rubbish, rotting kitchen waste, old tin cans, broken bottles, etc, etc. To make matters worse, it had rained heavily just before our visit, so apart from having to pick our way through the garbage, we also had to slosh through the sticky mud to get around the forlorn-looking site. Seeing such an important fossil site in such a disgraceful state, our non-South African visitors shook their heads - and we South Africans hung ours.

We clambered, slithered and slid gingerly over and around all the litter and through the mud in our search for fossils, and thanks to the eagle-eyes of 'Oom James' and his intimate knowledge of the dongas over the years, we soon had assembled several collectable fossils among the party. But one member of the party, Rupert Wild, had his eyes open for other

things too. In his scratching about, Rupert came across a heavy, crumpled, mud-covered shapeless lump of metal sticking out of the side of the donga. Curious as to what it might be, he picked it up and put it in his rucksack, and promptly forgot about it until he got home to Germany.

Soon the conference was all over, and our visitors went their various ways. Rupert returned to Stuttgart, where he cleaned up the metal lump he had picked up in Harrismith, and saw that it had a vague shape and that it was made of some alloy of lead (hence the weight), probably pewter. He gave the mangled lump to a tin-smith friend of his, to see if there was any chance of discovering what it was. His friend set about trying to restore it.



*The Harrismith Mug.*

Several months later Rupert contacted me to say he was returning what he had found to South Africa, as he thought it was probably of some historical significance, in which case he felt it properly belonged back in South Africa. Soon the returned mystery item arrived back. Imagine our surprise when we opened the parcel to find a magnificently restored pewter beer mug! The tin-smith in Germany (whose name I unfortunately do not know) had done a masterly job of restoring the original shape and decorative finishes of the mug, and had skillfully repaired a neat hole through one side of it -- almost certainly a bullet hole. Equally intriguing were engraved inscriptions which could be made out on the sides of the tankard. On the 'rear' side (i.e. 'behind' the handle if held by a right-handed quaffer) is the not-unexpected inscription 'PINT', signifying the capacity of beer the mug could hold. On the 'front' side (i.e. facing the quaffer) is the inscription 'RA Canteen'.

So this was a beer mug from the canteen of the Royal Artillery, when they were stationed in Harrismith, presumably during the Boer War; the style of the engraving supports a date around the turn of the previous century. And who knows if the neat round hole in its side is not where some bleary-eyed soldier used it for target practice after a raucous night in the Other-Ranks' Mess of the R.A.?

Now, through the sensitivity and generosity of spirit of Rupert Wild, we had in our hands a piece of unexpected recovered history; but what to do with it?

In discussions with James Kitching, we decided the best and most useful thing to do would be to inform the Harrismith Town Council of what had happened, and to offer to return the tankard to them for display in their local museum or municipal offices, in return for an undertaking from them to stop using the Harrismith dongas as a refuse tip and to remove what had already been dumped there so that the site could once more become a Mecca for visiting palaeontologists to which we would be proud to take them.

To their lasting shame, the city-fathers of Harrismith did not see their way clear to acceding to our request. As a result, the dongas remain a disgusting mess, and a crucially important and world-renowned fossil site is relegated to a refuse-strewn blight on the landscape.

When I returned to Wits from Port Elizabeth in 1996, the Director of the BPI, Prof. Bruce Rubidge, asked me what he should do with the mug which had been safely and carefully stored in a cupboard in his office, which in turn had been mine at the time I left to go to Port Elizabeth in 1987. I contacted Rupert Wild in Germany to ask what he felt should be done, and he re-iterated his view that it should stay in South Africa, and that he would be very glad to go along with any decision the PSSA Committee might take about its future. Consequently, in discussions between Bruce Rubidge and me, we decided that we would propose to the BGM that the Society should use it to inaugurate a new trophy to be awarded at the Biennial Conference. Since we did not have a trophy or prize for the best paper overall given at the conference, we suggested that this is what it should be awarded for. Rupert Wild enthusiastically supported the suggestion that it be used as a floating trophy, and suggested it should be named in honour of James Kitching, as a tribute to the incalculably valuable contribution he had made to palaeontology as a discipline, and not least of all to the PSSA itself.

The BGM at Bloemfontein enthusiastically endorsed these proposals, and I undertook to ask James Kitching if he would do us the honour of allowing *us* to honour *him* in this way. He graciously agreed when I spoke to him on 11 October 2002.

So the PSSA now has the '*James Kitching Trophy*', to be awarded to the presenter of the paper judged by the adjudication panel to be the best overall at the conference, the only condition being that if in the opinion of the judges no one paper reaches the desired standard, it should not be awarded at that particular conference.



*Rose Adendorff, winner of the 'Best Paper Award', with the James Kitching Trophy in hand.*

As noted elsewhere in this issue, we *do* have a winner! The inaugural winner of the James Kitching Trophy is Dr Rose Adendorff, a PhD student at the BPI (Wits), for her paper (given jointly with Dr Marion Bamford) entitled '*Hirsutum intermittens*: a reinterpretation of an enigmatic ovulate glossopterid fructification'.  
Congratulations, Rosie!

*Mike Raath, BPI (Palaeontology), Wits*

## NEWS FROM:

### BILLY DE KLERK, ALBANY MUSEUM, GRAHAMSTOWN

Greetings from Settler Country! Since attending the October PSSA '2002 meeting in Bloemfontein, life has returned to normal again - what a great meeting we had. Congratulations again to James Brink and his team for all their efforts.

Being a "civil serpent" and working for the Eastern Cape provincial government has had its frustrations but the palaeontology rewards make up for that drawback. Much of my time has been taken up with the continuing production of artwork for our palaeontology gallery. On that note it is nice to welcome Gerhard Marx (previous artist at the AM) back to South Africa after his five year stay in the US. Gerhard has settled in Oudtshoorn and is taking on art commissions and has agreed to start on a series of palaeo-Karoo landscape paintings for me this year. The "Asante Sana" dicynodont trackway is still an important focus of activity - both research and conservation wise. During September Alain Renaut, Romala Govender (BPI at Wits) and Johann Neveling (Council for Geosciences), visited the Museum to discuss research techniques on fossil trackways in the Karoo - particularly work that had been done on the "Asante Sana" trackway. My Grahamstown team of volunteers, including new PSSA member Prof Marius Vermaak (head of the Rhodes Philosophy Dept.) and our Gauteng guests traveled to "Asante Sana" to extend the excavation of the palaeosurface. This was done in anticipation of the construction of an open permanent barn-like structure which will form part of an extensive conservation programme on the palaeosurface. Good news was that two additional trackways were exposed during this dig and are being mapped and described at present

Around mid last year I commissioned the consultant exhibition/art team of Mr Terence Coffin-Grey and Mrs Terry Donnelly (both retired from the Zimbabwe Natural History Museum, Bulawayo) to produce a full-scale model of the dicynodont trackmaker (*Aulacephalodon*). Mr John Hepple (technician in the Rhodes Geology Dept) and I completed the produced of three superb models in mid January - one now stands in the Karoo veld at

"Asante Sana" private game farm (palaeogame); one has found a good home at the BPI Museum at Wits and one has been placed in our Museum gallery.

**NB News Flash!! We are taking orders!!** I hope to sell a few to University and Museum institutions locally and abroad.

Now that this model is finished Terence has started with the production of a model of the small Cretaceous theropod dinosaur (Kirky) that was described from the Kirkwood Fm in 2000.

Good news on the trace fossil front is that in October 2002 I received a report of a new dicynodont(?) trackway fossil that had been exposed on the banks of the Kat River just to the south of Fort Beaufort. On an historical note this new trace fossil is located on the farm where Andrew Geddes Bain found his first dicynodont "bidental" in 1838 "at Milldenhall's, about 5 miles south of Fort Beaufort. It appears as if this single trackway is located in the *Cistecephalus* Assemblage Zone of the Beaufort Group. The prints are not well defined but manual and pedal prints can be identified and traced over a distance of c.25m - other isolated individual prints are also evident. Mapping and study of this fossil will start shortly. I guess thats all for now -  
Cheers, Billy



ROGER SMITH, DEPT KAROO PALAEONTOLOGY  
SAM/IZIKO MUSEUMS OF CAPE TOWN

With the never ending distraction of restructuring, job grading and reapplying for posts it is quite surprising that the Iziko museum scientists managed to get anything productive done this year. However, I think we did pretty well overall and most of us still have our jobs.

When the game of "grab a job" came to an end we found we had lost two staff members to the management team. Karoo Palaeo found itself whittled down to the bare bones- myself as sole researcher, Annelise Crean and Hedi Stummer as preparators and Sheena Kaal as 1/2 day collections assistant. We sincerely hope Iziko will find a way to retain Anusuya's vacated research post and put some preparators back in the lab so that we can start to build a new team.

The year began with the usual public activities, Summer School lectures and two long weekends running the Cedarberg Retreat involving generous helpings of sediments and fossils topped off with insects, birds, plants and rock art.

In March Bruce invited me to meet him, Christian Sidor and Alison Beck on Spreeufontein farm near Prince Albert to work on a trackway surface. We mapped and photographed a set of 5 probable dinocephalian trackways, preserved on a sandstone palaeosurface. The preservation, however, was not good enough to do more detailed morphological studies of individual impressions but the parallelism of the tracks does suggest herding behaviour. Hopefully Bruce and I will write this up in 2003.

In April Hedi, Annie, Paul and I set up camp on Walplaas near Aberdeen to finish collecting around the new *Proburnetia* locality. We needed to confirm that the new fossil that was found here a couple of years ago, which Bruce and I are busy describing, is in fact from the *Tropidostoma/Cistecephalus* zone boundary. Over the past 2 years this farm has yielded a couple of large dicynodont (*Odontocyclops*) skeletons and several gorgonopsians of the *Aelurognathus* type all of which are on display in the

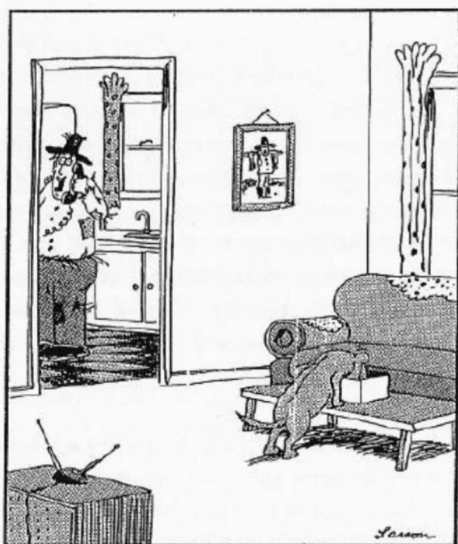
new *Fossil Stories* exhibition in the SA Museum. Amongst the numerous small dicynodonts Annie found this time round there was an interesting small (5cm long) gorgonopsian skull that she has already prepared.

Paul's most memorable moment on this trip was the when he dropped a big dolerite boulder on his ring finger and chopped off the top. I recovered the severed tip from beneath the boulder and rushed him to Graaff Reinet hospital but it was too crushed to re-attach. His finger has now fully healed and is just a little shorter than it should be.

The last 4 days of this trip was spent with a group of UCT students who are doing a course called "*Religion and Science in an African Context*". Prof Brian Warner an astronomer and I were given the task of exposing these students to the hard evidence for the antiquity of the earth and evolution.

In May I spent a week with a BBC film crew based at Wellwood farm doing a documentary for the Horizon series called "*The day the Earth nearly died*". This was a show and tell on the P-T boundary work that we have been doing in the area and a good rehearsal for the upcoming field excursions. It was screened in UK in December this year.

June was taken up with mounting a new display called "*Fossil Stories*" which features many of the large fossils that Hedi, Georgina and Annie have been preparing over the past 10 years. The opening date was set to coincide with the *Mesozoic Terrestrial Ecosystems* Conference held in the Waterfront in July. This is when things really got hectic- John Hancox and I had the crazy idea of running back-to-back field excursions through the Karoo. From Jo'berg to Cape Town with sedimentologists from the IAS Congress, drop them off and attend the *Mesozoic* conference in Cape Town, then pick up a crowd of palaeontologists and head back. Two 7 day field excursions to plan and run - two separate guidebooks to compile and print and two conferences to organise and participate in with an exhibition launch in the middle. That was one July that we will never forget. Special thanks to Hedi for her catering talents on both field trips- she really made the delegates feel special.



"Yeah, I just got back! And the wizard I mentioned?  
He gave me a new brain! ... It's on the coffee  
table as we speak!"

During the global summit week, Anusuya organized an NRF sponsored 1 day symposium at the SA Museum dealing with the sustainable development of palaeotourism. The morning was taken up with a series of invited speakers presenting all aspects of palaeotourism in South Africa, the afternoon was a trip to the West Coast Fossil Park to see one such enterprise in action.

In October I traveled to the SVP conference in Norman, Oklahoma to join Martin Lockley on a 4-day field excursion to various vertebrate trackway sites in the northern "panhandle". The Late Triassic trackways were especially interesting to me because they show many similarities to the Lesotho tracksites but with the added bonus of definite sauropod tracks. The SVP conference was held in a large conference hotel on the outskirts of Norman that was very plush but also cripplingly expensive. I found myself skipping meals and eating from vending machines just to stay afloat. The presentations were, as always, very satisfying. It is so rejuvenating to get a concentrated dose of vertebrate palaeontology every couple of years!

November saw us back in the dig site at West Coast Fossil Park where Annie did some superb cosmetic preparation on the Sivathere bone bed whilst Pippa and I crawled around the 28 square metres of exposed bonebed doing bone-by-bone identification and taphonomic analysis. We also gridded out our next excavation site and did some detailed sedimentological logging of sections in the mined-out area. Our research at the West Coast Fossil Park is now funded by NRF as a multidisciplinary project entitled "Palaeoecology of the West Coast Region" however, with SAHRA no longer issuing excavating permits and the new provincial heritage councils not yet in place means it looks likely that I will have to discontinue this line of research.

Next year is fully booked with more P-T boundary work with Peter Ward as well as our first preliminary sampling of what we are calling the T-J boundary in the Clocolan district. Hopefully, in March, I will be joining Chris Sidor and his compatriots in Niger following up on some recent discoveries of Permian vertebrates there. There are also some fossils to excavate around Graaff Reinet that we will have to make time for before they disintegrate and hopefully a full month digging at the West Coast Fossil Park. In between times there are papers to write, and more work on Fossil Stories and hopefully some palaeobiology students.

Cheers

*Roger Smith*

#### Publications for 2002

\* SIDOR, C.A. and SMITH, R.M.H. (submitted) A new galesaurid (Therapsida: cynodontia) from the Late Permian of South Africa. *Journal of Vertebrate Paleontology*.

\* SMITH, R.M.H. and RUBIDGE, B.S. (submitted) A New Burnetiamorph (Therapsida: Biarmosuchia) From The Late Permian Of South Africa: Implications For Trans-Pangean Therapsid Migration. *Journal of Vertebrate Paleontology*.

\* RETALLACK G.J., SMITH, R.M.H., WARD, P.D. (accepted) Ecosystem extinction across the Permian-Triassic boundary in the Karoo Basin of South Africa. *Bulletin of the Geological Society of America*.

\* SULLIVAN, C., REISZ, R. & SMITH, R.M.H. (accepted) The Permian Mammal-like herbivore *Diictodon*, the oldest known example of sexually dimorphic armament. *Proceedings Royal Society*.

\* SMITH, R.M.H., HANCOX, P.J., RUBIDGE, B.S., TURNER B.R. AND CATUNEANU, O., (2002) *Mesozoic Ecosystems of the Main Karoo Basin: from Humid Braid Plains to Arid Sand Sea*. Guidebook 8<sup>th</sup> International Symposium on Mesozoic Terrestrial Ecosystems, Cape Town, South Africa, 117 pp.

\* HANCOX, P.J., SMITH, R.M.H., RUBIDGE, B.S. and NEVELING, J. (2002) *From Deserts to Glaciers; A 100 million year transect of the terrestrial sedimentological sequence of the main Karoo Basin*. Excursion Guide, 16<sup>th</sup> International Sedimentological Conference, Rand Afrikaans University, South Africa. 114pp.

\* SIDOR, C.A., B.S. RUBIDGE, R.M.H. SMITH, and S.P. MODESTO. (2002). New therapsids from the Permian of South Africa: Implications for early therapsid evolution. *Journal of Vertebrate Paleontology* 22, p.107A

\* SMITH, R.M.H. and SWART, R., (2002) Arid Zone Sedimentary environments and vertebrate Taphonomy in a Mid-Triassic Rift Valley: the Omingonde Formation of Central Namibia. *PALAIOS*, 17, 249-267.



"I might have missed, Lou, but I take some satisfaction in knowing I busted up their little party."

JOHN HANCOX, SCHOOL OF GEOSCIENCES, WITS

- Salutations from the Seds Side -

Let me start this contribution by bolstering my shares with the editor by wishing him congratulations on the successful completion of his Ph.D - Keep up the good work Johann, and all the best for your future.

The last six months seem to have (if possible) gone even quicker than the six that preceded them, and much has been on the move. Early July saw a short course on tectonics and the African continent at Wits presented by Jon Dewey and Kevin Burke, followed closely by the 16<sup>th</sup> International Sedimentology Conference at RAU. Two sessions were of direct interest to South African Palaeontology, with papers on the cave fills and Pleistocene river sites, as well as a Karoo session to close off the Friday. Saturday morning saw Roger Smith, Bruce Rubidge, Johann Neveling and I off on a post-conference Karoo Field-trip to Cape Town. We had a great trip, and all four seasons (sometimes in the same day). The delegates seem to have enjoyed the Karoo and South Africa, although a certain Canadian geologist was not impressed by being snowed on in Africa - provided some laughs about cooling at the Permo-Triassic Boundary however.

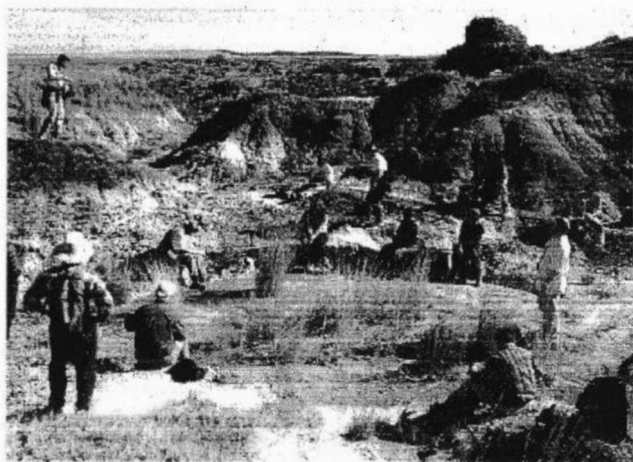
This was followed directly by the Mesozoic Terrestrial Ecosystems, where it was really great to see and hear what Mesozoic workers are up to. Once again the end of the conference saw Roger Smith, Johann Neveling and I on a post-conference field trip, this time doing the reverse leg from Cape Town to Johannesburg. A stop at Winaarsbaken proved particularly valuable, with Roger finding a nice *Cynognathus* skull within the first ten minutes, and Kitty Thomas some great fish fossils (what are these shiny things that look like fish scales?). From this find I managed to work my way up to the layer where they were coming out, and to collect a few new fish for Patrick Bender (with whom I am jointly working on the fish from the *Cynognathus* Assemblage Zone).

Sticking with conferences, a strong South African presence was felt at the Gondwana 11 in Christchurch, New Zealand, with no fewer than six South Africans present (Marion Bamford, Michiel de Kok, Peter Booth,

Patrick Bender, Maarten de Wit and myself) as well as Ross Damiani (honorary SA). Nice to get re-acquainted with Norton Hiller, and to see what a lovely city he has chosen over Grahamstown. Mid-week we all set off on various tours, with Patrick, Ross and myself doing an east to west transect of the island, ending up with one foot on the Pacific Plate and one on the Australasian plate. Amazing scenery and geology, and the odd Kea thrown in for good measure.

I arrived back on Saturday the 31<sup>st</sup> August, just in time to present a talk on Gondwana at the second 4 billion year day seminar held in the great hall (to co-incide with the World Summit on Sustainable Development). The theme had changed slightly from that of the first to encompass environmental change more directly. Next day I was off on a weeks Sedimentology and Stratigraphy trip with my third year students - finding lots of amphibian bits in a Katberg road-cutting near Bosh (Natal).

Early October saw the gathering of the masses at the 12<sup>th</sup> Palaeontological Society of South Africa (PSSA) Conference. Two days of talks were followed by a days outing to Pleistocene fossil sites (and for the more ba-



*John introducing the MTE Conference delegates to the Early Triassic Driefontein locality*

listically inclined shooting at paper targets of your favourite (*strange way to 'treat' your favourites - Ed*) Boer war characters. The talks were varied and interesting, and show that South African's are still at the forefront of a number of avenues of palaeontological research. Congratulations to Rosie Ardendorff on the best presentation award, and to Robyn Pickering for the best student paper (nice to see a sedimentological study being appreciated).

Apart from conferences, work continues on a number of projects. The sedimentology and taphonomy of the Driefontein site has now been written up and will be submitted later this month. Work continues at this site however, particularly on collecting the microfaunal elements. In a monumental effort to help, Susan Evans spent two days with me following on the Mesozoic trip trying to identify as many fragments as possible. Its nice to find someone who actually likes looking at *small stuff*.

Jim Hopson spent a week following the trip in the BPI, and managed to look at a few pieces of the cynodont material from Driefontein and the other lower *Cynognathus* Zone sites. His identification of a number of fragments as *Cynognathus* confirmed that this fauna is in fact a subset of the *Cynognathus* Assemblage Zone. More recently Fernando Abdala has reconfirmed this, by a find of a small dentary fragment of *Cynognathus* at Driefontein. Fernando has also been busy in the collections at the BPI, and has managed to unearth the first articular of *Scalenodontoides* in a box of scrap I collected way back in 1993.

Dicynodont studies still going well, with lots of new material that Alain, Cecilio and I were talking about at the PSSA. Still struggling with dicynodont systematics however.

In August, Johann Neveling, Ken Angielczyk and myself spent a week in Natal studying the uppermost Permian and lowermost Triassic, and due to my ornithological bent, avoided being car-jacked. Two overseas tourists in front of us were not as lucky however, being relieved of their car, money, cameras, clothes, passports and good memories of South Africa. This is

really included as a word of warning to anyone working in the Njasuti area to be particularly careful, especially when transporting fossils.

November saw Emese Bordy enlightening Bruce Rubidge and myself during a whirlwind weeklong Elliot Formation trip. Her postdoc research has borne many fruits and should all be in press this year. Apart from her sedimentological research Emese and her husband (Momadu) have discovered numerous new palaeontological sites in the Elliot, which will hopefully be productive with further collecting.

Work also continues on the various Pleistocene cave and river sites, with papers currently in press on aspects of Gladysvale and Cooper's D.

Student-wise, with Johann finished I now only have M.Sc. students. Anthony Rutherford has successfully presented his M.Sc. proposal on the Sedimentology, Stratigraphy and Palaeoenvironmental setting of the area around Thaba Nchu in the Free State. Henry Mgbeahuruike is busy preparing his proposal and by the time you read this will have undertaken his first field-session. Louis Coney is examining the PTB section at Kommandodrift Dam, and analyzing samples geochemically to search for evidence of the cause of this, the mother of all mass extinctions. Last but not least Robyn Pickering is starting her work on the younger fill (ca. 215 ka) at Gladysvale.

That's all from the sed's side,  
Best Wishes for 2003,  
John

#### Recent and *in press* publications

\* BRANDT, D., HOLMES, H., REIMOLD, W.U., PAYA, B.K., KOEBERL, C. & HANCOX, P.J. 2002. Kgagodi Basin: A first impact structure recognized in Botswana. *Meteoritics and Planetary Science* 37(12), 1765-1780.

\* CATUNEANU, O., HANCOX, P.J., CAIRNCROSS, B. & RUBIDGE, B.S. (in press). Foredeep Submarine Fans and Forebulge Deltas: Orogenic off-loading in the underfilled Karoo Basin. *Journal of African Earth Sciences*.

- \* DAMIANI, R.J. & HANCOX, P.J. (in press). New temnospondyl amphibians from the *Cynognathus* Assemblage Zone. *Journal of Vertebrate Palaeontology*.
- \* HANCOX, P.J., BRANDT, D., EDWARDS, H. 2002. Sequence Stratigraphic analysis of the Early Cretaceous Maconde Formation (Rovuma Basin), northern Mozambique. *Journal of African Earth Sciences* 34, 291-297.
- \* HANCOX, P.J., BRANDT, D., REIMOLD, W.U., KOEBERL, C. & NEVELING, J. 2002. Permian-Triassic boundary in the northwest Karoo basin: Current stratigraphic placement, implications for basin development models, and the search for evidence of impact. *Geological Society of America Special Paper* 356, 429-444.
- \* LACRUZ, R.S., BRINK, J.S., HANCOX, P.J., SKINNER, A.S., HERRIES, A., SCHMIDT, P. & BERGER, L.R. (in press) Palaeontology and Geological context of a Middle Pleistocene Faunal Assemblage from the Gladysvale Cave, South Africa. *Palaeontologia africana*.
- \* LATIMER, E.M., HANCOX, P.J., RUBIDGE, B.S., KITCHING, J.W. & SHISHKIN, M.A. 2002. The temnospondyl amphibian *Uranocentrodon*, another victim of the end-Permian extinction event? *South African Journal of Science* 98, 191-193.
- \* MARUOKA, T., KOEBERL, C., HANCOX, P.J. & REIMOLD, W.U. 2002. Sulfur geochemistry across a terrestrial Permian-Triassic boundary section in the Karoo Basin, South Africa. *Earth and Planetary Science Letters* 6496, 1-17.
- \* SHISHKIN, M.A., RUBIDGE, B.S., HANCOX, P.J. & WELMAN, J. (in press). Re-evaluation of *Kestrosaurus* Haughton, a capitosaurid temnospondyl amphibian from the Upper Beaufort Group of South Africa. *Palaeontology*.
- \* TOOTH, S., MCCARTHY, T.S., BRANDT, D., HANCOX, P.J. & MORRIS, R. 2002. Geological controls on the formation of alluvial meanders and floodplain wetlands: the example of the Klip River, Eastern Free State, South Africa. *Earth Surface Processes and Landforms* 27, 797-815.
- \* TOOTH, S., MCCARTHY, T.S., HANCOX, P.J., BRANDT, D., BUCKLEY, K., NORTJE, E. and McQUADE, S. (in press). The geomorphology of the Nyl River and Floodplain in the semi-arid northern Province, South Africa. *South African Geomorphic Journal*.

#### FRANCIS THACKERAY, TVL MUSEUM, NORTHERN FLAGSHIP INSTITUTE

Francis Thackeray has been working at Kromdraai with Jose Braga (Bordeaux University). With the help of Stephany Potze (Transvaal Museum), wonderful rodent fauna from Bolts Farm is being prepared in a new prep lab at the TM. The rodent assemblage from Way Point 160 is thought to be about 4 million years old. Samples were collected during fieldwork with Frank Senegas (Montpellier), Dominique Gommery (CNRS, Paris) and Jose Braga (Bordeaux). The French Connection is strong! We are very grateful for opportunities for collaboration and financial support. Frank Senegas has been awarded a postdoctoral fellowship from the NRF to work in Afrique du Sud.

#### COUNCIL FOR GEOSCIENCE, PRETORIA

The *Mesozoic Terrestrial* and *Gondwana 11* conferences have come and gone. I (Patrick Bender) found both to be worthwhile, with new research possibilities arising, thanks to all those involved for organizing such 'smoothly-oiled events': Cape Town and Christchurch proved to be fantastic venues. Talking to researchers at these conferences revealed to me that certain areas of specialist fossil fish expertise is presently globally fairly limited, although studies using fish fossils (including micro-elements such as scales and teeth) are on the increase.

In terms of new publications: myself and John Hancox submitted a paper to *Gondwana Research* based on my *Gondwana 11* presentation (the title of the paper: *Newly discovered fish faunas from the Early Triassic, Karoo Basin, South Africa, and their correlative implications*); the paper concerning a new lower Beaufort Group fossil fish is in print in *Palaeontologia africana* (volume 38); in-house there is a paper in press for the Council for Geoscience (CGS) Bulletin (*Late Permian actinopterygian [palaeoniscid] fishes from the Beaufort Group, South Africa: biostratigraphic and biogeographic implications*); and I am in the process of finalising another article for the CGS Bulletin (*New fossil fish from the*

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"NO TELEVISIONS, NO STEREOS, NO COMPUTERS, NO MALLS...  
BOREDOM IS WHAT KILLED THE DINOSAURS!"

*Lystrosaurus and Cynognathus Assemblage Zones).*

Johann Neveling and myself are currently evaluating and reviewing Council for Geoscience Palaeontology Section future plans and possibilities. Whatever transpires, I feel confident that we can continue to provide research support to our colleagues, in particular regarding the Karoo Basin. We are still busy preparing the small Museum and parts of the Fossil Store at the Silverton head office to receive visitors (please contact Ria Putter (012 841 1383) for more info).

Johann Neveling reports an eventful 2<sup>nd</sup> semester 2002. First up was the symposium-silly-season with 2 back-to-back conferences and post-conference fieldtrips. During the early part of July I attended the 16<sup>th</sup>

International *IAS* (*International Association of Sedimentology*) conference that was held at RAU. Except for attending the odd lecture, it entailed a lot of running around, helping Bruce Cairncross and other members of the organizing committee with practical matters. After this very interesting conference I accompanied **John Hancox**, **Roger Smith**, **Bruce Rubidge** and **Hedi Stummer** on the post-conference field trip, traversing the Karoo with a bunch of sedimentologists down through the Karoo, to Cape Town. We were tracked the whole way by some icy weather, but that did not dampen anyone's enthusiasm. After a week the whole cold, but satisfied, caravan arrived in Cape Town, just in time for the *MTE* (*Mesozoic Terrestrial Ecosystems*) conference that was held at the Cape Town Waterfront. The latter I found very interesting with a wide range of talks. At the end of the week we were at it again (this time minus Bruce), taking another group of happy campers through the Karoo in the opposite direction, although this time we concentrated more on the fossils. As fieldtrips usually are, both these trips were very enjoyable (and also learning) experiences, although slightly exhausting.

Late August saw me accompanying John Hancox and **Ken Angielchuk** on a short fieldtrip to work on the Permo-Triassic rocks in Kwazulu-Natal. It is a very intriguing part of the basin with very interesting sedimentology. I was also fascinated by the large number of burrows in this part of the world. John has some very interesting theories on these and even I, a former sceptic where burrows are concerned, is becoming a convert.

There was also time for a very short trip before the PSSA 2002, accompanying **Romala Govender** and **Alain Renaut**, to **Billy de Klerk's** footprint site close to Graaff Reinet. Billy did an impressive amount of work and I learned quite a bit about footprints, their documentation, as well as their preservation for future generations. As for the PSSA-meeting in Bloem, I enjoyed it thoroughly and must compliment the organisers (James & Lloyd) for a very good and smoothly run conference. The large number of papers presented contained a lot of interesting material, while the mid-conference fieldtrip to Cornelia was a personal

highlight as I have heard so much about it before. On the post-conference Karoo fieldtrip Johann Welman and Johan Loock showed us some of the exiting sites at the base of the Beaufort, while I had the pleasure to show some of the work that Roger, John, myself and others have been doing on rocks of Early to Middle Triassic age. Following the post-conference fieldtrip, I lingered for a day or so in the southern Free State, together with Ross Damiani, Fernado Abdala and Matt Alison, to finish on fieldwork before tuning back home...for a final confrontation with my thesis.

The last bit of October was used to make the (absolutely very) last corrections to my thesis and generally wipping (somehow the verb accurately reflects my feelings at this stage) it into shape for submission at the end of the month. Fortunately that is all over now and I can safely say that the "Never-ending Story" has finally reached its final chapter - what a relief. Since then I have been busy, catching up with a backlog of work (which somehow accumulated like mushrooms during the last few months), while a few papers also need to be carved out of the thesis while my brain is still hot on that subject. Then there is also the more pleasurable duty of planning new research. Although that appears to be taking care of itself (its alive!) - my diary is already filling up at an alarming rate.

Cheers until next time!

*CGS Palaeo*

#### **NEWSFLASH FROM ARTHUR CRUICKSHANK....**

The work I did in New Zealand with Norton Hiller is still doing the rounds, accompanied by a simplified(?) cladogram. We await peoples' comments! George Iliopoulos is busy writing up his PhD, and it seems that I am not too old or decrepit to be inducted as co-supervisor to two new plesiosaurian projects!

Regards to everyone...

*Arthur*



After years of harboring his secret desires,  
Ned finally hits on the senior librarian.

## BERNARD PRICE INSTITUTE FOR PALAEOONTOLOGICAL RESEARCH

Last year was one of the most exciting and productive periods for the BPI. All 7 of our full-time Honours students completed their degrees and 6 have continued with their studies, registering for an MSc with the BPI. All projects turned out very successfully, and each student will be publishing their work soon. **Robin Pickering** was awarded the *Lystroraurus* Shield at the 2002 PSSA for the best student paper, and as a final "cherry-on-the-top" no fewer than two of our students (**Robin Pickering** and **Cecilio Vasconcelos**) obtained both distinctions and the highest Honours marks for the entire School of Geosciences. The highly successful and exciting Honours graduates are joined in their MSc studies by a new student, **Henry Mgbeahuruike** (say that three times fast!) from Kenya, who will be working with **Bruce Rubidge** and **John Hancox** on the Koonap and Middleton Formations. Our PhD numbers have also increased with the registration of **Merrill Nicolas** who has taken on the monumental task of investigating vertebrate biodiversity and populations across the Permian-Triassic of the Karoo.

The palaeobotanical section of the BPI rounded off the year with exciting breakthroughs on the morphology of glossopterid fructifications (**Rose Adendorff**) and the discovery and description of the oldest amber in southern Africa. And **Marion Bamford** started the New Year by initiating a fantastic field-research project in collaboration with **Halle Sims'** Smithsonian research team. Marion's ongoing project with her French collaborators, on southern African Cretaceous woods, plants and their biogeography has also been paying off dividends with no fewer than 6 publications in the last year. Marion has also been frantically busy organising the *SASQUA (Southern African Society for Quaternary Research)* Conference, which is taking place in March-April 2003.

The Palaeoanthropological Unit for Research and Exploration (PURE) has been working up a storm, and had a particularly empowering series of presentations at the *Physical Anthropology Conference* in Buffalo, New York, USA. **Colin Menter** has completed his PhD, and will be continuing research, as Dr Mentor, at Sterkfontein. **Christine Steininger** is in the final submission stage of her MSc, and has already started working on her PhD. **Lucinda Backwell** is very busy organising a special Conference in honour of Prof Tobias, entitled "*From Tools to Symbols. From Early Hominids to Modern Humans*", which will run in early March 2003.

**Bruce Rubidge** completed a very successful and well-received Alex duToit Lecture Series. He also managed to undertake a fieldtrip to the lowermost Beaufort in the Jansenville and Prince Albert Road localities, where he and his co-workers (**Chris Sidor**, New York College of Osteopathic Medicine, New York Institute of Technology and **Doug Erwin**, Natural History Museum, Smithsonian Institution, Washington) measured stratigraphic sections and plotted fossil occurrences. Importantly, they also discovered ash beds and samples have been sent to **Sam Bowring** at MIT for dating. Another MSc student supervised by Bruce and John Hancox, **Anthony Rutherford**, got his project off the ground when Bruce conducted a field trip to the Thaba Nchu area to work on the biostratigraphy and palaeoenvironments of this region. Bruce and John have also been working closely with our new postdoctoral fellow, **Emese**

**Bordy**, researching the bio- and lithostratigraphy and sedimentology of the Elliot Formation. We are overjoyed that **Fernando Abdala** (another postdoctoral fellow) has joined us from Argentina, via Brazil, to study southern African cynodonts. He has a keen interest in comparing, taxonomically but also physiologically, the South American and southern African taxa. He is already working in close association with **Johann Neveling**, and has also initiated dental morphology and postcranial physiology projects with Alain Renaut.

**Alain Renaut** and John Hancox have expanded their Triassic dicynodont repertoire, but Alain has also made significant inroads on the gorgonopsian project, and last year presented a paper at the First *International Palaeontological Congress* in Sydney Australia. His presentation dealt with a preliminary gorgonopsian phylogeny, and in particular a description of an unusual "primitive" little gorgonopsian that may hold some clues to the origins of these fascinating creatures. Our longstanding and ever-productive postdoctoral fellow, **Ross Damiani**, has found time not only to work with John Hancox, Johann Neveling and Bruce Rubidge on the fascinating Driefontein locality, but also on the remarkable Barendskraal locality with Johann, **Sean Modesto** (Carnegie Museum of Natural History, Pittsburgh, USA) and **Adam Yates** (Bristol University, UK); and investigate the evolution of reptiles over the Permo-Triassic boundary; and report on a most exciting burrow discovery; and continue his ongoing project on the Triassic temnospondyle amphibians; and work on the taxonomy of some of the Triassic dicynodonts with Alain; and...! Most of the BPI staff, and many students, are already working on the PSSA Conference for 2004 (see notice in this issue), we trust that all PSSA members will be joining us in Johannesburg for what promises to be a truly special event.

*Alain Renaut*

## PSSA MEMBERS & FRIENDS - E-MAIL

Dr Fernando Abdala	abdalaf@geosciences.wits.ac.za
Dr Rose Adendorff	Adendo@sci.pg.wits.ac.za
Dr John Almond	naturaviva@universe.co.za
Dr Eric Anderson	e.anderson@ru.ac.za
Dr Heidi Anderson	HMA@nbipre.nbi.ac.z
Dr John Anderson	jma@nbipre.nbi.ac.za
Ken Angielczyk	etranger@socrates.berkeley.edu
Dr Graham Avery	bcage@uctvax.uct.ac.za
	gavery@iziko.org.za
Lucinda Backwell	BACKWELL@science.pg.wits.ac.za
Shaw Badenhorst	shawb@nfi.co.za
Dr Marion Bamford	bamford@geosciences.wits.ac.za
Dr Bernard Battail	bbattail@cimrs1.mnhn.fr
Dr Patrick Bender	bender@nfi.co.za
Dr Lee Berger	bergerl@geosciences.wits.ac.za
Dr Jennifer Botha	jbotha@iziko.org.za
Dr J. Braga	jbraga@anthropologie.u-bordeaux.fr
Dr James Brink	jbrink@nasmus.co.za
Dr Anusuya Chinsamy-Turan	achinsam@botzoo.uct.ac.za
Dr Arthur Cruickshank	cruia900@leicester.gov.uk
	aric.cruickshank@ntlworld.com (@ home)
Dr Ross Damiani	DamianiR@geosciences.wits.ac.za
Dr Billy de Klerk	B.deKlerk@ru.ac.za
Dr Sue de Villiers	nifaasa@iafrica.com
Dr Daryl de Ruiter	deruiterd@geosciences.wits.ac.za
Ludwig Döhne	doehne@global.co.za
Dr Francois Durand	fd@rau.rau.ac.za
Dr Heidi Fourie	Fourie,h@nfi.co.za
Mrs T. Franz-Odendaal	tfranz@botzoo.uct.ac.za
Rob Gess	robg@imagenet.co.za
Dr Dominique Gommery	gommery@ivry.cnrs.fr
Dr Fred Grine	fgrine@notes.cc.sunysb.edu
Dr Gideon Groenewald	gideon@bhm.dorea.co.za
Pippa Haerhoff	pippah@iafrica.com
Prof AV Hall	avhall@iafrica.com
Dr John Hancox	HancoxP@geosciences.wits.ac.za
Prof Eric Harley	harley@chempath.uct.ac.za
Dr Norton Hiller	nhiller@cantmus.govt.nz

Dr Jim Hopson	jhopson@midway.uchicago.edu
Madel Joubert	mjoubert@samuseum.ac.za
Dr Gillian King	gm20@admin.cam.ac.uk
Dr Herbert Klinger	hklinger@iziko.org.za
Dr Kevin Kuykendall	kuykendall@anat.wits.ac.za
Elizabeth Latimer	elizabeth.latimer@ananzi.co.za
Dr Julia Lee-Thorp	jlt@beattie.uct.ac.za
Mary Leslie	mleslie@sahra.org.za
Johan Looek	geoci@rs.uovs.ac.za
Marius Loots	mloots@medic.up.ac.za
Dr Tom Mason	trm@star.arm.ac.uk
Ian McLachlan	mclachlai@petroleumagency.sa.com
Dr Jeff McKee	mckee.95@osu.edu
Mrs Lynn Meyer	c/o Fourie.h@nfi.co.za
Darlington Munyikwa	munyikwa@Avu.org
Dr Johann Neveling	jneveling@geoscience.org.za
Dr Martin Pickford	c/o bsenut@cimrs1.mnhn.fr
Ms S. Potze	potze@nfi.co.za
Ms S. Prat	sandrineprat@hotmail.com
Dr Mike Raath	RaathM@geosciences.wits.ac.za
Dr Sanghamitra Ray	sray@samuseum.ac.za
Dr Alain Renaut	RenautA@geosciences.wits.ac.za
Ray Renaut	RRenaut@sci.pg.wits.ac.za
Dr Gideon Rossouw	zlagjr@zoo.upe.ac.za
Lloyd Rossouw	loyd@nasmus.co.za
Prof Bruce Rubidge	RubidgeB@geosciences.wits.ac.za
Prof Izak Rust	icrust@iafrica.com
Dr Friedmann Schrenk	schrenk@hrzpub.th-darmstadt.de
Prof Louis Scott	scottl@sci.uovs.ac.za
Frank Senegas	senegas@evol.isem.univ-montp2.fr
Dr Brigitte Senut	bsenut@cimrs1.mnhn.fr
Dr Russell Shone	glarws@orca.upe.ac.za
Dr Chris Sidor	Sidor.christian@nmnh.si.edu
Dr Roger Smith	rsmith@iziko.org.za
Dr Francis Thackeray	thack@nfi.co.za
Dr Juri van den Heever	javdh@maties.sun.ac.za
Prof Nick van der Merwe	Nikolaas@beattie.uct.ac.za
Dr W.F. v Zyl	gideon@bhm.dorea.co.za
Annie v/d Venter	amafa.pmb@pixie.co.za

Dr Eddie van Dijk  
Prof Marius Vermaak  
Dr Anne Warren  
Dr Johann Welman  
Dr Mike Zavada

eddie@vandijks.com  
m.vermaak@ru.ac.za\_  
zooaw@zoom.latrobe.edu.au  
kvertpal@nasmus.co.za  
mzavada@providence.edu

**Reminder:**

*Deadline for contributions for the next issue of  
PalNews is 30 May 2003.*