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PAL NEWS NUUS

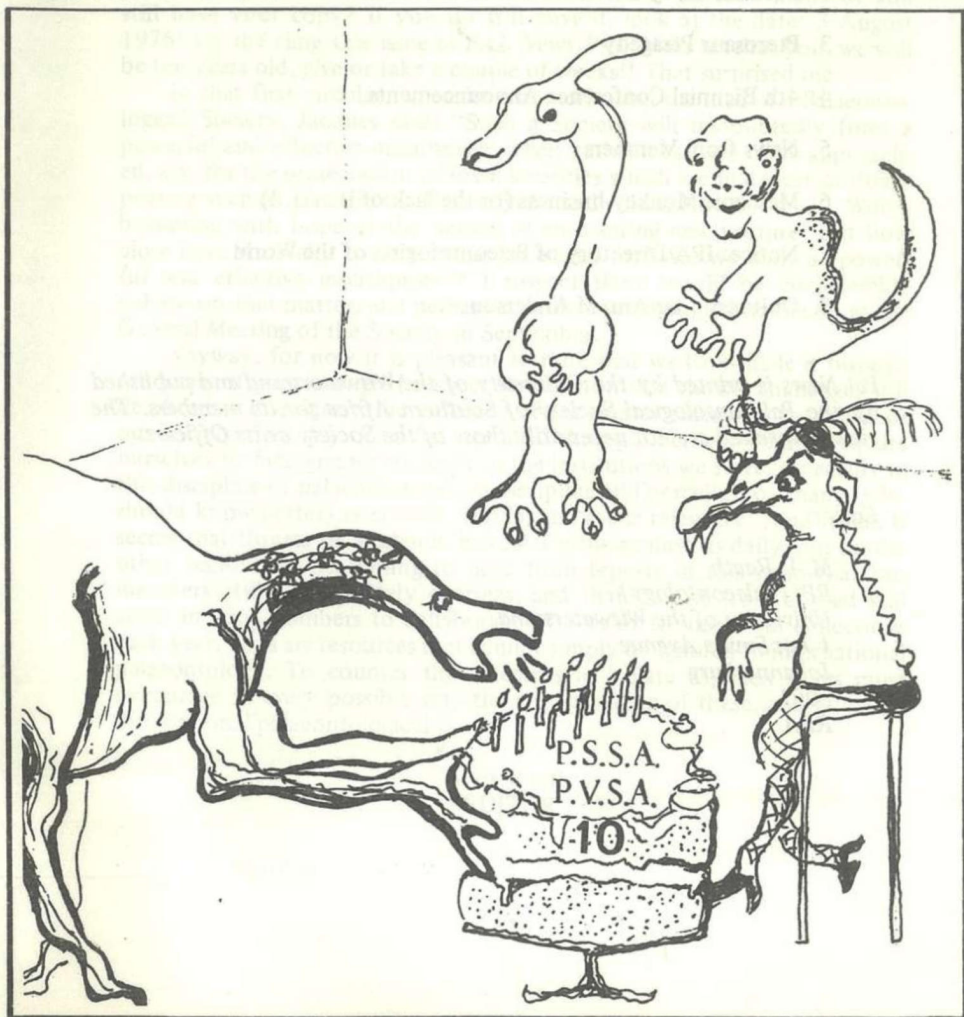
Biannual Newsletter of the Palaeontological Society of Southern Africa

Halfjaarlikse Nuusbrief van die Paleontologiese Vereniging van Suider Afrika

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PAL NEWS
PAL NUUS

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EDITORIAL

Ten Down!

Sorting through my PSSA files recently, looking for inspiration for this particular editorial and also for the Presidential Address that I must deliver in Cape Town later on this year, I got a bit of a shock. Hidden right at the back of the oldest file – one that accompanied my family and me on our trek south from what was then Rhodesia in 1978 – was a copy of Jacques van Heerden's first circular that started it all. How many of you still have your copy? If you do still have it, look at the date: 3 August 1976! By the time this issue of *PAL News/PAL Nuus* reaches you, we will be ten years old, give or take a couple of weeks!! That surprised me.

In that first circular, when he was motivating the idea of a Palaeontological Society, Jacques said: "Such a Society will undoubtedly form a powerful and effective mouthpiece when authorities have to be approached, e.g. for the preservation of fossil localities which are in danger of disappearing such as Harrismith, Thaba Nchu and Aliwal North". Words brimming with hope at the launch of an exciting new venture! But how close have we really come to what he hoped for? Are we truly a "powerful and effective mouthpiece"? I suspect there would be considerable debate on that matter, and perhaps it is one that should be taken up at the General Meeting of the Society in September.

Anyway, for now it is pleasant to note that we have made it through ten years of great change. I suspect we all know that the big challenges still lie ahead – it is sure to be a decade of far greater change in the fabric of our society than any of us has yet lived through. Perhaps we must square ourselves to face greater austerity in the institutions we serve, especially in this discipline of palaeontology – a discipline still perceived by many (who should know better) as esoteric, lacking in "social relevance", and futile. It seems that threats of academic boycotts grow against us daily, but on the other hand it is heartening to note from reports in this issue that our members still travel widely overseas, and that visitors from abroad still come in good numbers to collaborate with us or to utilise our collections each year. Ours are resources that cannot simply be ignored in international palaeontology. To counter the attempts to isolate us, each of us must encourage in every possible way the strengthening of these, and all other international palaeontological ties.

Mike Raath
EDITOR

EDITORIAL

THE FIRST BRACHYURID CRUSTACEAN FROM THE EOCENE(?)
ALEXANDRIA FORMATION

by

W.J. Smuts* and G.J. Rossouw**

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Port Elizabeth, 6000.

The well preserved right hand of a crab has been found at Ingleside near Colchester, in conglomerate beds of the Alexandria Formation, a unit of rocks which has already yielded approximately 80 species of molluscs, four species of crustaceans (cirripeds and ostracods) (Ruddock, 1972), as well as a new echinoid (Smuts, 1985; Smuts, in prep.).

Comparison with 35 modern South African crab genera in the collection of the Zoology Department, University of Port Elizabeth suggests that the Ingleside crab has close affinities to *Scylla serrata* (Forsk.) (Barnard, 1950; Day, 1974). Based on comparisons of external finger and hand morphology at least five points of similarity were found between *Scylla* and the Ingleside specimen.

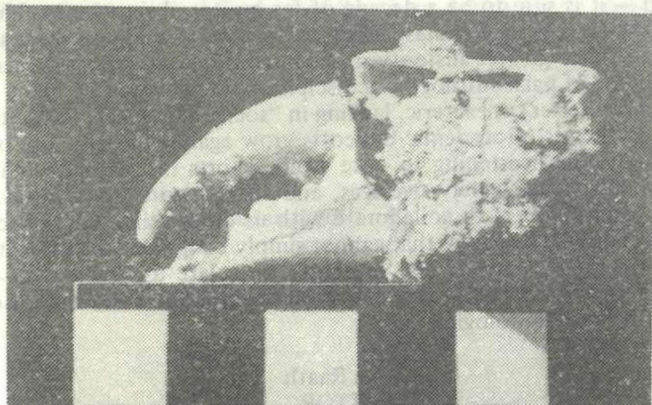


Figure 1. The Ingleside crab. (Bar scale = 5cm).

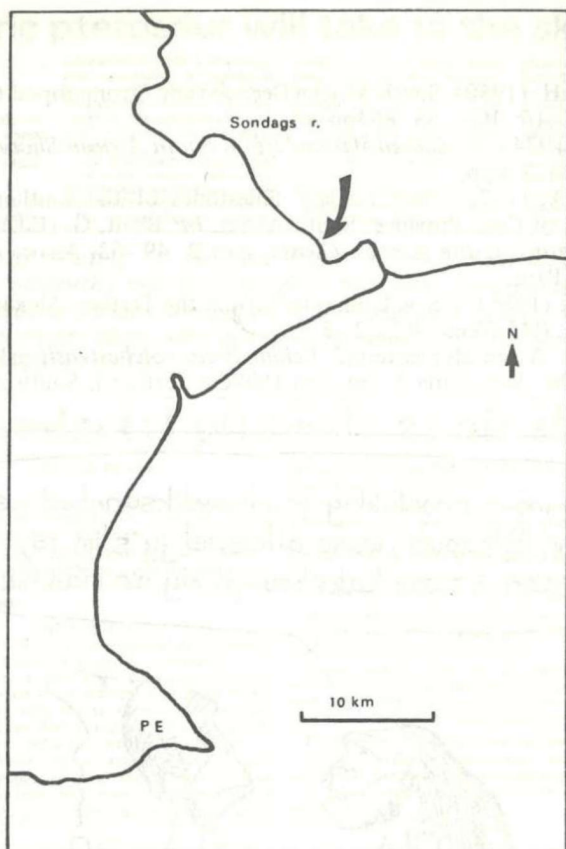


Figure 2. Location of site of discovery indicated by arrow.

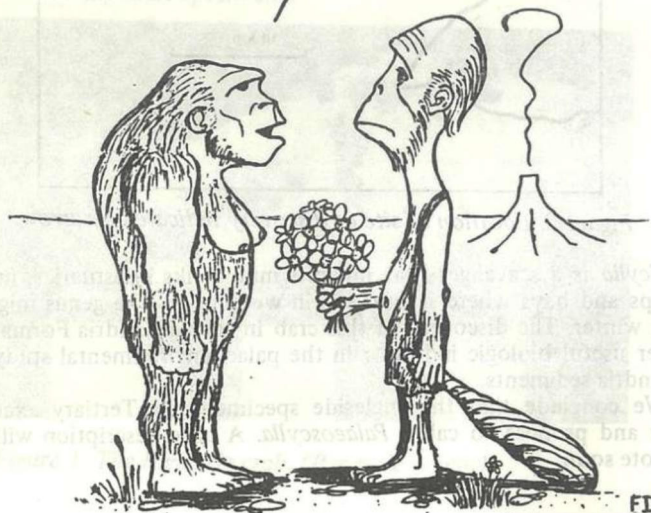
Scylla is a scavenger that inhabits mud-banks in estuaries, mangrove swamps and bays where it burrows in weed beds. The genus migrates to sea in winter. The discovery of this crab in the Alexandria Formation is a further useful biologic indicator in the palaeoenvironmental study of the Alexandria sediments.

We conclude that the Ingleside specimen is a Tertiary example of *Scylla* and propose to call it *Palaeoscylla*. A type description will follow this note soon.

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Ek moet ongelukkig jou huweliksaanbod weier
mnr. Pilt-down; want alhoewel jy slim is,
staan 'n swak kakebeenlyn my nie aan nie.



In October 1985 the papers said....

Prehistoric pterosaur will take to the skies again

By Jaap Boekkool,
Science Reporter

THE pterosaur, the world's largest prehistoric flying animal known only from fossils, will fly again next month — after 64 million years.

The fish-eating member of the dinosaur family, which resembled

a behemoth bat with a 12m wingspan used mainly for gliding, is being re-created into a carbon fibre skeleton covered with latex wings by the American human flight researcher, Mr Paul MacCready.

Mr MacCready designed the pedal craft Gossamer Albatross, the first man-powered machine to cross the Channel six years ago. His paleontological adviser,

Wann Langston of Texas, thinks there is evidence that the light-boned pterosaur glided, flapped, pivoted and twisted to control flight in its heyday.

For this reason a special computer will be installed into the facsimile animal to make it glide, flap, pivot and twist like the real McCoy of the distant past.

Glider models of the night-marish animal, also known as the

pterodactyl, have flown successfully. The completed replica will be radio-controlled from the ground.

American corporations have so much faith in Mr MacCready, who won major prizes for his 25 kg bird craft in which cyclist Brian Allen pedalled across the Channel that they, and the Smithsonian Institution, have invested \$900 000 in reviving that prehistoric bird. □

News reports relating to the test flight of a life-sized computerised, supposedly airworthy model of the giant pterosaur, Quetzalcoatlus northropi, appeared in various newspapers in the latter part of May. The following two reports are taken, with acknowledgement, from The Star of Johannesburg on May 19 and 21.

Pterodactyl pteragedy at air show

The Star Bureau

WASHINGTON — In what has become known as a "Pterodactyl Pteragedy", a prehistoric flying reptile disappointed thousands of spectators at the weekend by crashing on its only public flight.

Quetzalcoatlus northropi, a 6 m-wingspan monster which cost \$700 000 to build, broke its plastic neck on impact.

SMITHSONIAN

But it will be fixed and exhibited at the Smithsonian Institution's National Space Museum.

Flight experts took more than a year to build the pterodactyl for a museum film about flight. The flapping-wing, half-sized replica of the giant which ruled the skies 65-million years ago, was to be shown once publicly before going on display.

It was created by the aviation innovator and father of human-powered flight, Dr Paul MacCready, who built the Gossamer Albatross which made the first and only human-powered flight

across the English Channel. He also later developed a solar-powered craft.

What beat him and some of the world's finest aeronautics and paleontological brains in the more than 50 failed tests to achieve flight, was the awkward structure of the tailless beast:

"To make this thing fly was like trying to shoot an arrow with the feathers in front," he said.

The gawky creature would have vied with some of America's deadliest fighting machines at Andrews Air Force Base on Saturday.

It was towed into the air on a wheeled dolly with a tail attached. The dolly dropped off too soon, before the Pterosaur's computerised autopilot was activated by a radio-controller.

The Pterodactyl corkscrewed and tumbled.

All that money and brainpower have proved one thing to the scientist: Nature did it better.

A paleontologist grumbled: "Now you know why it's extinct."

Soar like a stone

IT WAS a pterrible, pterrible thing that happened to the pterodactyl. Not only did nature conspire to prevent his evolution, but even mankind's best brains can't get him up in the air again — or rather, keep him there. Pteruly, the pterodactyl has received a raw deal. But it is nice to know

that some people are still prepared to spend as much as \$700 000 in an attempt to reconstruct the prehistoric beast and get him to ptry again. The failure of the attempt, at an American air show the other day, shows that modern ptechnology isn't perfect either.

4th BIENNIAL CONFERENCE

CAPE TOWN, SEPTEMBER 22-25, 1986

Arrangements for the 4th Biennial Conference are proceeding well, according to the Organising Committee at the South African Museum, Cape Town. Juri van den Heever has given us the draft outline programme, which I believe is quickly filling up with offers of papers. So far the basic structure of the programme looks like this:

- Mon 22 September: Registration
PSSA General Meeting
First Session of Papers
Evening: Cocktail party hosted by South African Museum.
- Tues 23 September: Papers all day
Evening: Braai at venue to be finalised (sea view)
- Wed 24 September: Papers all day;
Completion of any outstanding business from General Meetings;
Evening: Society Dinner at venue to be announced (during which the Society's 10th birthday will be celebrated)
- Thurs 25 September: Field excursion to Langebaanweg, led by Dr. Brett Hendey.

This outline programme is filling out, and respondents to the first circular sent out some weeks ago will shortly receive a further circular giving information on accommodation, etc., and asking for firm commitment of papers, posters, etc. It is intended to circulate a volume of abstracts to all final respondents before the conference; these abstracts will in any case be available at registration.

It is particularly pleasing to announce that, unless things go badly wrong between now and then, the Society will have two honoured overseas guests at the conference — Prof. Armand de Ricqlès of the University of Paris, and Dr. Rupert Wild of the Bavarian State Museum in Stuttgart, with his wife Barbara. Both guests have agreed to give papers, and the titles of their talks will be notified as soon as they are known.

There are several reasons why every member should make every effort to attend this conference:

- first, it is our small Society's 10th birthday;
- second, we are privileged to be the first society to "christen" the new facilities of the South African Museum;
- third, we will have the privilege of hearing two distinguished foreign visitors speak on their specialities
- fourth, and by no means least, the conference is being held in the fairest Cape. *That* should be reason enough!

Although we cannot yet be certain of it, it looks as if the Registration Fee will be in the vicinity of R36.00 – which will cover normal conference costs as well as the costs of the braai and the Society dinner. There will be a discount for bona fide students. Accommodation costs will have to be met by individual delegates. The organisers are trying to arrange inexpensive accommodation for the students who will be attending; otherwise intending delegates will be able to select from a range of hotels which will be notified by the Organising Committee.

Keep your eyes on your mail box for the next circular, and get your positive response off by return post!

SEE YOU THERE!

RED EYE

by Gordon Bess



NEWS FROM MEMBERS

(Relatively few reports this time. Here are the ones I received. Ed.)

Bruce Rubidge, National Museum, Bloemfontein.

I am still busy with my research project on the palaeo-environment and fossils of the Ecca-Beaufort contact zone in the Southern Karoo. The biggest problem however is to get these fossils prepared, especially the dinocerophalians, as the rock is extremely hard.

During April 2 weeks were spent in the field, in the Prince Albert district mainly in order to excavate two dinocerophalian skeletons which were found lying side by side last year, but also to check up on stratigraphic sections which I had drawn up of the Ecca-Beaufort contact zone. I had a pleasant surprise on returning to the camp one evening to find Burger Oelofsen and a party of students waiting for me.

James Brink and I have prepared a 60-page brochure entitled "Life through the ages" which is designed to complement the palaeontology exhibits at the National Museum. This is now in the hands of the printers.

B.W. Oelofsen, Universiteit van Stellenbosch.

Sedert die vorige *Pal* nuus het ek en Johan Looek die goeie nuus ontvang dat ons genooi is om gedurende die 1987/88 somer saam met die span van Jim Collinson en Molly Miller na die Ellsworth gebergtes, Antarktika te gaan. Ons hoop om die biosones, wat in die Prins Albert en "Witband" plaaslik teenwoordig is, in die Swartskalies van die Ellsworth gebied op te spoor.

Ons wag nou om te hoor of die projekvoorstel by die N.S.F. goedgekeur gaan word en dit sal 'n spanningsvolle tydjie wees.

Die ander nuus is dat Dr. R.P.S. Jefferies van die Britse Museum beplan om vroeg in 1987 na Suid Afrika te kom om na ons Carpoidea te kom kyk. Jefferies beskou die Carpoidea as primitiewe chordata en op die voorvaderlike lyn na die Werweldiere. Hy verwys na die groep dan ook as Calcichordata. Ek was reeds in verbinding met Hannes Theron van die Geologiese Opname se kantoor in Bellville en met Roy Oosthuizen oor moontlike eksemplare wat Jefferies te sien kan kry. Roy het, soos met alles in die Bokkeveld die geval is, die meeste eksemplare en sal Jefferies beslis na die versameling moet gaan kyk.

Die artikel oor die haaiskedel uit die Prins Albert skalie wat Roy op sy plaas ontdek het is nou in die pers en sal hopelik eersdaags verskyn. Die beskrywing van die reuse Eurypteried uit die Witteberg wat ek en Roy

saam met Charles Waterston gedoen het, het verskyn en ek het nog 'n klompie herdrukke indien iemand daarin belangstel.

Geluk aan Johan Looock en Johan Visser met die verwysing na hulle artikel in die oorsig van die VIde Gondwana Kongres wat in *Geotimes* verskyn het.

H.C. Klinger, South African Museum, Cape Town.

Current research: I am at present working on the ammonite family Baculitidae. This is a veritable Aegean stable as far as synonymies are concerned, and the baculitids seem to be as variable as the minds of the people who had worked on them.

Recent field trips and overseas travel: Last July I attended the second international Cephalopod Symposium in Tuebingen, my old *alma mater*. Apart from the personal pleasure of being there once again, the symposium was stimulating. However, compared to the first symposium held at York in 1979, the themes were somewhat too rigid, and clearly not intended for those interested in straight ammonite stratigraphy or systematics. The field excursion through southern Germany and the Austrian Gosau was terrific. This really gave us the chance of sampling the various species of beer and schnapps with colleagues of various nationalities with unpredictable results.

Jim Kennedy (Oxford) visited my department in August, going through our collections with his usual efficiency. In September, after I had finished my lectures at U.C.T., we set off for the field, starting off in Pondoland and ending up in Zululand, trying to redo what we had done in 1970. Alas, both of us have aged in the mean-time. Nevertheless, we collected our usual quota of rocks which we had to rail down to Cape Town. Life with Jim is trying — he works hard, but also plays hard, and I had difficulty keeping up with both. Anyway, it was nice to have someone to talk to again and get all sorts of useful and useless bits of information.

A cherry of this field trip was the discovery of two sauropod vertebrae from an Upper Cretaceous locality. This is the first record of sauropods from the Upper Cretaceous of Africa, and Nial Mateer (Laramie, WY) identified the material as probably belonging to the family Titanosauridae. We have submitted a MS to this effect to *S.A. Journal of Science*.

Recent or forthcoming conferences: Good news is that Jost Wiedmann has invited me over to Tuebingen next year for the third European Cretaceous Symposium.

Diverse: I am still waiting for news from Betty Aguirre Urreta about visiting Argentina this year.

Keeping palaeontology in the family, Marc Booth has joined my department on a CSIR post

A.S. Brink, Geological Survey, Pretoria.

ILLUSTRATED BIBLIOGRAPHICAL CATALOGUE OF THE SYNAPSIDA.

The first of three parts of this catalogue will be published by the time this issue of *PAL News/PAL Nuus* appears. It comprises an Introduction, Taxonomic Indices, an Alphabetical list of Genera and Species, an Author's Bibliography and a random collection of specimen entries — some 200.

The second part (in about 2 years time) will consist of another collection of some 200 specimen entries. The third part (in about 3–4 years time) will round up the balance of some 200 species, along with updated versions of the taxonomic Indices, Alphabetical List and Author's Bibliography.

The idea of issuing the catalogue in three parts is not only that as one publication it would be too unwieldy; it was also considered that there may well be delays with the second and third parts, while the first might be useful in the meantime. Actually the original idea was that the first should deal for a start with the best known forms; the second with the lesser known forms and the third with the most poorly known forms, while hoping that some of the latter might become better known in the meantime.

In practice it has turned out that the first third comprises forms on which information was most readily available, postponing well-known forms currently still being evaluated. The second part will include these well-known forms and no doubt some updated versions from the first part.

The third part will round up the left overs, along with updated versions from the first and second parts and of course, updated indices and lists.

Recipients are advised to keep the first volume intact until the second becomes available. On receipt of the second, both can be dismembered and integrated, using the file numbers given instead of pagination as a guide. The alphabetical-cum-numerical file numbers will ensure that integration will be in taxonomic order. All pages are punched for filing in a standard file cover. The third and subsequent updatings can be similarly dismembered and integrated.

All recipients are requested NOT to keep criticisms to themselves. The first issue is not supposed to be perfect, but by the time the third is issued, it is hoped that the whole (1 plus 2 plus 3 plus afterthoughts) will be as near to consensus of opinion as possible. To achieve this everybody is sincerely requested to submit criticisms to the author. In fact, anybody is welcome to submit completely revised entries — especially new entire

of forms not yet included, where such substantial contributions will be published under the contributor's name. An entry can be regarded as a substantial publication by the contributor.

Improvements can range from typographical and spelling errors, synonymy disagreements, expanded references, improved lists of referred material, improved generic and specific diagnoses, and shortcomings in the illustrations. In particular, any disagreement about taxonomy is vitally important to know.

However, standardization of taxonomic terminations is not considered negotiable. The elevation of the Synapsida to Class status is only a matter of convenience (artificial) for the purpose of this catalogue and is not to be regarded as official or as a formal recommendation.

Arthur Cruickshank, Hinckley, Leicestershire, U.K.

I'm glad that my change of address notice worked, but your note for news for this edition of *PAL News/PAL Nuus* has just arrived by sea mail!

My news is that two papers are in press:

1. Archosaur predation on an East African Middle Triassic dicynodont. *Palaeontology*, 29 (2): 415-422 (1986).
2. Biostratigraphy and classification of a new Triassic dicynodont from East Africa. *Modern Geology*, 9 (in press; due out sometime this year).

I continue to work on the Ruhuhu faunas in the Geology Dept. at Birmingham. Two things are in progress — one an investigation of the significance of movable quadrates in dicynodonts compared with those of other therapsids, and, *at last*, a start is being made on the faunal analysis of all the Ruhuhu faunas. Both projects are in the *very* early stages!

Apart from that, I edit the Palaeo. and Strat. volume for *Geo. Abstracts*. Number 1 for 1986 has been out for a little while now, and number 2 is due very soon. When things are running normally there will be six issues a year. I'll get some publicity leaflets to you in due course. It's an Elsevier company.

Sue Gay at Cambridge is going well with her study of some Permian dicynodonts from E. Africa, concentrating on the taxonomy of the *Dicynodon(s)* and *Pelanomodon(s)*. The latter probably include "*Dicynodon locusticeps*"; with a view to testing if and how it was ancestral to *Geikia*. The final section of her work will be a comparison of the action of jaw muscles in *Oudenodon*, *Dicynodon*, *Kingoria*, and *Pelanomodon*, and a palaeoecological comparison of East and South African faunas.

I've seen the final MS of Gillian King's account of the Anomodontia for the *Handbook of Palaeoherpetology* — and a very impressive piece of work it looks. Certainly a great deal to stimulate more research.

Mike Raath, Bernard Price Institute (Palaeontology), Wits University.

I recently spent two weeks in north America, mainly to attend the First Dinosaur Systematics Symposium held at the brand new Tyrrell Museum of Paleontology in Drumheller, Alberta, Canada from 2nd to 5th June, organised by Phil Currie and Ken Carpenter. There is little doubt in my mind that this is the finest palaeontological museum I have ever seen, and I am privileged to say I have seen quite a few! A fact-sheet given to visitors to the museum estimates that the final all-up cost of the whole Tyrrell Museum project is of the order of 30 million Canadian Dollars, a lot of that amount coming from the Alberta Provincial Government! The complex was officially opened in September 1985. The building is a pleasing blend of modern design and monumental tradition, with lots of slabs of polished rock in the finishes. The display galleries are outstanding — very imaginative designs, technically stunning in their execution, and highly informative, using lots of modern communications technology. Virtually all of the many dinosaur and other fossil mounts have been re-crafted from scratch, even those that are casts of existing mounts in other museums. Of course, many of the display specimens are “the *real* thing”, consisting of skeletons recovered through the museum’s own field work in the adjacent badlands exposures of late Cretaceous beds. Most have been rigged up as free-standing mounts in dynamic groups set in accurate palaeo-ecological settings; scaffolding and other obtrusive metal supports are mercifully absent — no metalwork obtrudes, no matter what the viewing angle. The lighting of the displays is also mood-catching and dramatic, but not excessively so. Unfortunately, light levels are still too low for straightforward photography unless you have powerful flash facilities. This is always a problem in museums!

For me the visit was a unique experience; one of my big regrets is that I had so little time to stroll through the display galleries at my leisure. Our symposium programme was very full, and I didn’t want to miss any of the papers! I am glad, though, that we were conducted through the museum “behind the scenes”, so that we could see something of the storage and preparation facilities. It was all superb, and right up-to-date. They have sophisticated hydraulic lifting and moving equipment installed to handle material coming in from the field, or for moving heavy specimens into and out of storage; there are large industrial sandblasting machines, small air-brasive units and the more normal air-operated preparation tools and a whole host of useful mechanical preparation aids; a whole room is set aside as an acid preparation facility, the room itself being a fume-chamber; another whole room is permanently set up as a screenwashing rig to process large quantities of deconsolidated matrix to recover microvertebrates. Their collection catalogue is in the process of being computerised from

scratch, but one thing that surprised me was that although the Tyrrell Museum is part of the Alberta Provincial Museum service, they do not use the "CHIN" system for their computerisation. The acronym "CHIN" refers to the "Canadian Heritage Information Network" which was specially designed for Canadian museums, and is built around the very powerful database management software called "BASIS" (Control Data). The Tyrrell Museum is directly linked to a mainframe computer in Edmonton (seat of the Alberta Provincial Museum). All-in-all it is a facility that Alberta can truly be proud of, and it is a particular tribute to the dynamism of Phil Currie and his team. If ever any of you is out west in Canada, don't miss the opportunity to give yourself a treat. Visit it!

One of the most surprising things about this magnificent museum is that it is set just outside a little "dorp" called Drumheller way out in the badlands of Alberta, a little over 100 km northeast of Calgary. I suppose Drumheller is about the size of Harrismith — maybe just a little bit bigger. It may seem odd that such an out-of-the-way place should be chosen as the site for a major museum development, but the reason lies in the fact that Drumheller is in the heart of the badlands, to which visitors come in large numbers annually. The whole town is dinosaur-mad because of the far-flung fame of the dinosaur-rich late Cretaceous deposits exposed in the badlands (you reach them by taking the "Dinosaur Trail" out of Drumheller). Horrendously "kitch" life-sized dinosaur sculptures — all fangs, talons and drama — guard the entrances to many commercial stands in town, mostly those ubiquitous junk-food outlets where you are challenged to sample the speciality of the house — "Brontosaurus Burger and French Fries"! There's no doubt — the people *love* their dinosaurs!

I won't try to summarise the papers presented at the Dinosaur Systematics Symposium in this brief report, but one thing that I feel I should mention is the excellent press coverage the symposium got. Several local newspapers assigned reporters to it, and a public service TV network team stayed with the delegates for the duration of the conference. Even I, a South African, was interviewed by the Canadian TV team! We in South Africa must clearly take a leaf out of our North American colleagues' notebooks, and become more press- and publicity-conscious. We must stop being so shy, modest and retiring! Our science has wide popular appeal — as each of us knows who has been asked to talk to audiences of young and old alike — and only by giving it more popular exposure will we generate more public interest and — more important — *support* for what we do. In the lean years that lie ahead I have no doubt that we will have to look more and more to generating our own support from the public to further our projects, and we won't get it unless we excite them and show them the worth of our work.

Back home at the BPI we are still not quite finished with our move

into our new premises. Things happen slowly when you have to do everything yourself — including darkroom and seminar room construction, general woodwork, shelf construction, unpacking and shelving, etc., etc. Thanks to James Kitching, Chris Gow and the Technical Staff of the Institute, we are gradually getting there. Collections are still not fully accessible, but we haven't yet had to disappoint any of our visitors so far this year. But these duties *have* meant that writing up research work has had to take a temporary back-seat; in these days of cut-throat FRD demands, that is *not* good news!!

Our new building is named the "C van Riet Lowe Building for Archaeology and Palaeontology", marking the signal contribution made by Dr "Peter" van Riet Lowe to the development of these two disciplines at Wits, and also the fact that the two departments now share the same building.

Dr. Eva Kovacs-Endrody sent this piece, which she called 'The Good Old Days'

I needed to go through at least part of the oldest literature on southern geology and palaeontology in search of explanations for some disturbing questions which are still unanswered. You will hear the findings at our forthcoming conference in September; the most entertaining part of the old literature — the human side of the pioneer work — does not fit in a formal scientific presentation! To get acquainted personally (for it is possible through their writings) with Blandford, Medlicott, Feistmantel and other great men was a unique experience. I cannot resist sharing with you my amusement on reading Medlicott (Head of the Geological Survey in Calcutta after the retirement of Oldham), whose style is most entertaining.

1876, writing in the Annual Report:

"No theologian could be more impious in reducing the mysteries of existence to the compass of his narrow thoughts, than are often scientific specialists in imposing crude conceptions upon the proceedings of nature. Yet these ought to know better — that truth is discovered, not invented . . ."

"A compromise that the marine fauna should take precedence (in intercontinental correlation) would be a miserable confession of weakness, and quite out of place in a rational investigation . . ."

"The vicious practices of giving different specific names to fossils for no other reason than that they occur on different stratigraphical horizons, even at distant localities, and of trimming species to suit a fancied age, are the offspring of these false assumptions. Such a practice must utterly confound the attempt to work-out the natural history of organic evolution."

1876, footnote on Waagen's Paper:

"This key to the geology of India is one of the oldest on our bunch. But somehow the author of the paper must have taken a wrong impression of it, for his copy sticks in the lock"

"The paper is one of a kind that is now only too common. The production of them is no doubt encouraged by the principle of mutual laudation which is the evil spirit of scientific societies. A curious collection, illustrative of this class of literature, might be made under the title, Oracular Palaeontology. It must be a survival (largely Teutonic) of the barbaric instinct to deal in mysteries."

(Note: even in 1985 we still read about fossils "complicating the mystery still further").

1877:

"It is pretty generally understood that in mixed publications of acknowledged authorship the writers are separately responsible for the opinions expressed, the editor's veto being reserved for open breaches of logic or of propriety. As, however, I have been supposed to hold certain views, because they were allowed to appear in the Records of the Survey, it would seem to be the opinion of some that an official body of workers should run in a groove, that the chief of the staff should consider himself so superior to his official subordinates as to form, or at least control, their opinion. The notion may be a relic of the early British idea that a geological survey might be mainly carried on by men devoid of mental culture or scientific training"

1881:

"I may quote a passage from my preliminary report . . . as originally submitted for publication (Medlicott's italics). The passage and its context were, indeed, printed for departmental circulation at the time (i.e. in 1872), but were suppressed in the published report as not being in harmony with the ruling orthodoxy" (This was the passage in which Medlicott proposed the name "Gondwana" — "from the country of the most widespread aboriginal tribe of Central India, inhabiting a large portion of the ground formed by these plant-bearing rocks . . .").

If you want to read more about and from the Pioneers, let Eva know.

l'Amour d'Archosaur

Perhaps some of you have read the curious little book on dinosaurian extinction by L R Croft entitled *The Last Dinosaurs*: a new look at the extinction of the dinosaurs. In it he suggested that high light levels and higher temperatures in the late Cretaceous would have caused widespread development of cataract-blindness in the eyes of late Cretaceous dinosaurs, making it difficult for them to see. Of course, one of the consequences of this condition would be that it would then be very difficult for them to find mates. Thus they would have died out because of breeding failure — or, as the popular press likes to put it more bluntly, because of a lack of sex. Chris Gow found these snippets illustrating a penetrating article by Alan Coren on the sexual plight of those benighted Cretaceous dinosaurs



TRICERATOPS was perhaps the most tragic of the dinosaurs, being unquestionably the most repulsive, even by its own poignantly undemanding standards. A victim of its own evolution, it continued, pointlessly, to refine its disgusting physiognomy from something which sensibly repelled its enemies into something which finally repelled itself. A male triceratops would meet a female triceratops and, quite frankly, refuse to believe what it saw. For a while, each would make polite noises about minds being more important than appearances, they would discover all sorts of hobbies they had in common, they would agree to meet for a second date, and then they would go their separate ways and throw up.

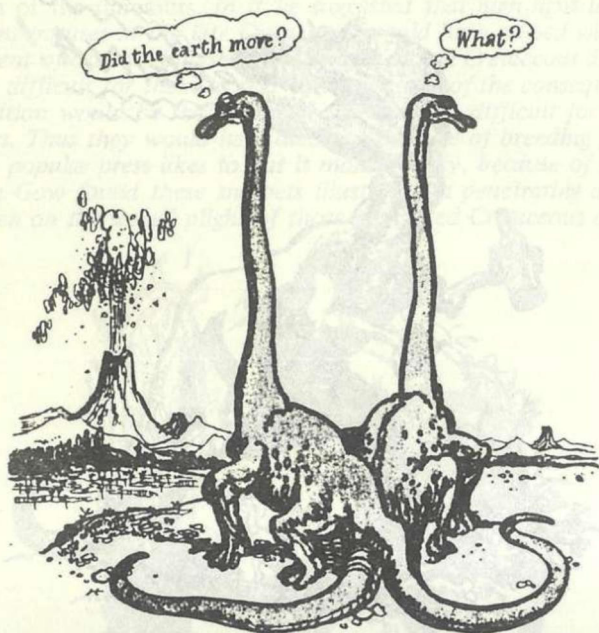
(more...)

(...atom)



TYRANNOSAURUS REX was, as its name indicates, the most powerful, the most arrogant, the most domineering, and the most egocentric of the dinosaurs. It is interesting primarily for the fact that it was probably the first animal (though not the last) to evolve sexual condescension into a suicide weapon. For 99.9% of the Cretaceous week, tyrannosaurus rex would kill anything that moved, eat anything that didn't, break up the landscape, laugh at its own lousy jokes, belch, scratch, snore, pull the hairs out of its nostrils, and go to lodge meetings. In the five hebdomadal minutes remaining (usually on Saturday night), it would suddenly leap on tyrannosaurus regina with terrible ineptitude. Finally, tyrannosaurus regina left, saying she had had enough. Or, in some cases, not enough.

(more...)



BRACHIOSAURUS was the dinosaur with the largest body and the smallest brain: such was the immense distance between its reproductive organs and its tiny cranium, it tended to have sex without realising it, and then immediately forget what had happened. Even if it had enjoyed the experience enough to want to repeat it, it could never remember what it was that it wanted to repeat. Males would often meet females, and both would experience a vague sense of occasion, staring desperately at one another until their heads began to droop. They would then part, wondering which one of them had been the tree.

(more...)

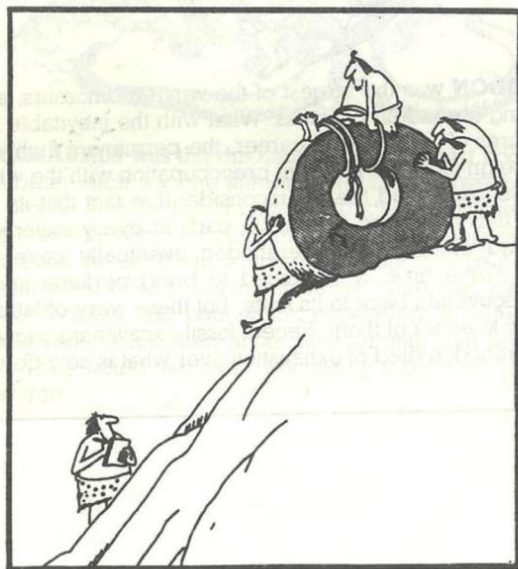


PTERANODON was the largest of the winged dinosaurs, and was always flying abroad on business. What with the inevitable worries and pressures of this stressful career, the permanent flight-lag, the strange foreign food, the constant preoccupation with the whereabouts of its luggage, and the not inconsiderable fact that its style of flight (*see illus.*) exposed its private parts to every inclemency of weather and altitude, the pteranodon eventually gave up sex altogether. For a time, it continued to bring perfume and small breakable souvenirs back to its mate, but these were of little evolutionary help to either of them. Recent fossil excavations suggest that the last pteranodon died of exhaustion over what is now Gatwick.



THE FAR SIDE

By GARY LARSON



Early experiments in transportation

NOTICE

INTERNATIONAL PALAEOONTOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

Plans are being prepared for the 5th Edition of the **DIRECTORY OF PALEONTOLOGISTS OF THE WORLD** to be published by the International Palaeontological Association in time for distribution at the 27th International Geological Congress, Washington, D.C., 1989. Formal notification and timings will be issued in 1986; requests for information from individual paleontologists and paleontological associations will be distributed throughout 1987 and 1988 with a deadline for receipt of data of December 1988; computerization of data will proceed through 1988 with final preparation of text and publication during 1989.

It is intended to provide the most complete listing possible of all of the active paleontologists of the world. We expect to obtain data from paleontological societies and organizations of all kinds as well as from individual paleontologists. Paleontological groups and individuals who are not members of IPA or who do not regularly receive the journal or newsletter of an IPA Corporate Member, should contact the Directory editor or IPA secretariat during 1987-88 to insure inclusion in the Directory. Suggestions and advice from all interested parties are welcome.

Copies of the 4th Edition of the **DIRECTORY** are still available from R.E. Grant (same address as Editor below) for U.S. \$7 (to individual members of national paleontological societies or sections) or U.S. \$10 (all others).

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OBITUARY : Ann M Anderson (1946–1986)

My colleague and friend, Ann Anderson, was born in Fort Beaufort, Cape Province, on the 12th October 1946. She spent her early childhood in the tranquil atmosphere of this demure Karoo country town – where her father was a medical practitioner – and attended the local primary school. She maintained a lifelong affection for the vagaries and idiosyncracies of “platteland dorps” and other outposts of civilization, and their inhabitants. Later she attended Queen Victoria High School in Grahamstown as a boarder, moving to Johannesburg for her final school years, where she attended St. Mary’s School for Girls. She entered Wits University in 1965, graduating with a B Sc in 1968 (Geology being one of her majors), and a B Sc (Hons) in 1970. She met her future husband, Ian Mc Lachlan, whilst researching the origins of trace fossils for her MSc/PhD. She later made a substantial scientific contribution to this area of palaeontology.

Ann was a good all-rounder – an educated person in the best sense of the word. At school, before the effects of a lifetime’s illness made themselves felt, she played tennis and participated competitively in swimming. She was also something of an artist, and it was always a delight to receive a humorous home-made birthday or christmas card from her. Her artistic nature was very evident in the splendid photographs she took while adventuring – sometimes in pursuit of fossils – with her husband, Ian, and later together with their daughter, Katy.

Always of an adventurous spirit, she drove herself with sheer will-power and determination to the limits of her physical endurance, in an heroic effort not to let her illness intrude upon the enjoyment of others, nor indeed inhibit what she had set her mind to do – like taking photos (at close range!) of elephants, balancing precariously on crutches, camera in hands!

I was always impressed with her cheerfulness, her ready laughter, and her sustained interest in current affairs and the doings of her friends and their families, even at times of great physical duress. There was often a great deal she might have complained about or become depressed over, but these were not the things she spoke about. With all my own robust good health, I felt she had a strength and inner resource far beyond my own, an indefinable quality of spirit to which few of us ever aspire.

It is difficult to do justice to her quiet courage and fortitude.

Ann died on 27 March, aged 39.

Judy Maguire.

*(Ann’s artistry and sense of humour featured in the launch of this, our newsletter – she designed the cover of the first issue of PAL News/Pal Nuus in September 1977, and wrote a short verse to accompany it. Her impish sense of humour also showed through in her choice of a family pet – she and Ian were for a long time accompanied almost wherever they went by, of all things, a Polecat, *Ictonyx striatus*!)*

Ann was a Foundation Member of our Society – her name appears at the top of the list of the first membership list ever issued, in April 1977.

We will all miss her. Our thoughts go out to Ian and Katy.

Ed.)

