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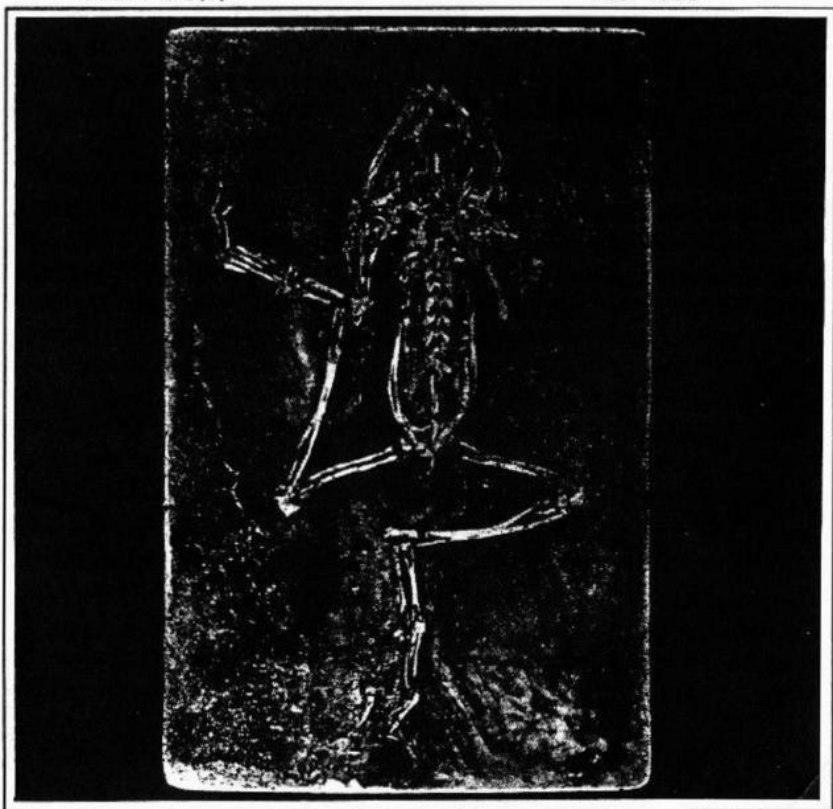
NEWS
PAL NUUS



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

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Dec. 1993



Propelodytes wagneri, an Eocene frog from Messel, West Germany (x1).

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Editor:	Dr Billy de Klerk	(Tel. 0461 - 22312 Fax 22398)
	Albany Museum	(email - amwd@hippo.ru.ac.za)
	Somerset Street	
	GRAHAMSTOWN, 6140	

Front Cover:

Cast prepared by Stuart A. Baldwin, Fossil Hall, Silver End,
Witham, Essex, England, CM8 3QA.)

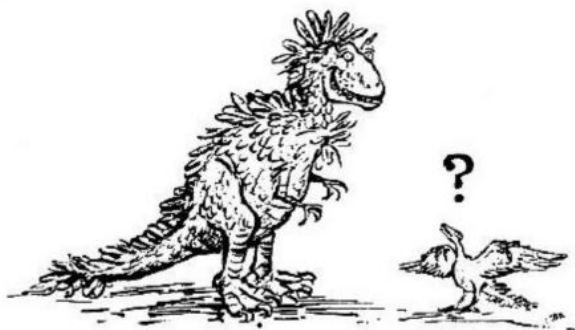
EDITORIAL

Greetings!

Well, once again we gear up for a new year - a very busy 1994 if I go by my new diary. Politically a new dispensation is on the cards for South Africa, with elections in April 1994, but more importantly the PSSA'94 conference will be held here in Grahamstown in September!

Please don't forget to send in your conference return slips!!

This is the third edition of Pal News that I have produced and I must compliment and thank those members who regularly send information in for inclusion into Pal News. As you all return to your offices after the Xmas - New Year break and open your new 1994 diary, please make sure that your first entries into it are the deadlines for Pal News submissions - **10 June 1994** and **30 November 1994**. Lets make the July issue a bumper one in advance of the PSSA meeting in September! Any contribution are welcome - snippets of news, cartoons or anything of palaeontological interest. Many thanks. Ed.



FURTHER COMMENT ON PILTDOWN AND TEILHARD DE CHARDIN

Francis Thackeray - Transvaal Museum, PO Box 413, Pretoria 0001.

Two years ago, in an earlier issue of PAL NEWS, attention was drawn to the possible involvement of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin in connection with the Piltdown "hoax", otherwise considered to be a joke which went wrong (Thackeray 1991 a&b). Stephen Jay Gould (1980, 1981 & 1983) had previously examined evidence pointing to this possibility, also considered by Louis Leakey (Spencer 1990). Gould focussed in particular on the fact that Teilhard had indicated in 1920 that the condyle of the Piltdown mandible may have been purposefully removed, implying deception; in 1920, only 8 years after the "discovery" of the mandible at Piltdown, deception had not been suspected in scientific circles. The deception was revealed only after detailed analyses had been undertaken by Kenneth Oakley and Joseph Weiner, some 40 years after the initial "discoveries".

Further attention to Piltdown, including Teilhard's possible involvement in the deception, has been given in recent issues of *Current Anthropology* (CA). Tobias (1992) has written at length on the Piltdown saga, and recently (Tobias 1993: 65-67) has clarified and corrected certain matters regarding Teilhard de Chardin. While noting that there is a "likelihood" that Teilhard was aware that the Piltdown fragments were part of a hoax, Tobias (1992, 1993) adheres to the view that Sir Arthur Keith is a primary suspect. Certainly, Keith played an important role in making Piltdown a major anthropological issue for more than three decades. However, several pieces of evidence suggest that Teilhard de Chardin could have been more than just aware of a deception concerning the Piltdown pieces, which included an orangutan mandible (with unnaturally worn teeth to give a human appearance), and parts of a human cranium that had been artificially stained.

Teilhard lived near Piltdown for a period of four years (1908-1912). The first cranial pieces associated with "Piltdown Man" were said to have been found around 1908, and many more fragments of "*Eoanthropus*" were found in 1912 shortly before Teilhard returned to France. The official announcement of the discoveries was made in December 1912, when Teilhard was in France to study for a palaeontological degree under Marcellin Boule, then the leading French palaeoanthropologist. However, he was again at Piltdown in August 1913, when he found the orangutan canine under highly suspicious circumstances.

Norman Clermont (1993: 587) has recently drawn attention to a conversation between Teilhard and Marcellin Boule, held in France in 1912 when they met for the first time. During that conversation, recorded by Teilhard himself, he had apparently spoken to Boule about the Piltdown canine. If that is correct, it means that *Teilhard must have known about this tooth more than one year before he was reported to have discovered it in England in 1913*. It is possible that Teilhard had not intended to record the conversation in a way which could be interpreted in this manner. However, there is evidence in files at the Natural History Museum (files DF 116/17), suggesting that the canine came from France. Admittedly this is based on hearsay at the time of discoveries at Piltdown, but it must nevertheless be considered in the context of other evidence that cannot be ignored. Perhaps most importantly, Woodward (1948) used the word "*incredulous*" in connection with the fact that Teilhard had found the canine *in an area which had already been thoroughly searched*, in August 1913.

The pongid canine was *painted*, not simply stained like the other Piltdown fragments. Having seen the very *unnatural wear* on the canine, I can only think that it was crying out for someone to recognise that it was unnatural. To my mind a joker could have been hoping that someone would *immediately* identify it for what it was: something artificial, something which might even be identified as a joke. Instead, it was misidentified by Woodward who was more familiar with fossil fish than with Hominoidea.

Teilhard referred to the *Pongo/Homo* beast from Piltdown as a "monster". If he had been partly if not entirely responsible for creating that "monster" in 1912 (or possibly even before then) with the intention of its being no more than a joke, could he have afforded to risk a future career in palaeontology by owning up after the official formal announcement in December 1912 when the beast was described and largely accepted as a specimen representing a new genus, *Eoanthropus*? Perhaps, if he had made a confession in confidence to a fellow priest after the official announcement, his conscience could have been cleared; at the same time he could have planned an attempt to expose the joke for what it was, without risking his own future career in either palaeontology or theology. In the context of this scenario, it is not surprising that the canine should have been found by *Teilhard* during the period when he was briefly back in England in August 1913.

In correspondence to a fellow priest, Felix Pelletier, dated January 1 1913, Teilhard wrote saying that "I am in the position to have the opinion of Boule and Obermaier, who are not easily taken in, especially if the finds are English" (letters of T. de Chardin, published 1965; see also Spencer 1990). Tobias (1993: 67) comments that this reference to Boule and Obermaier not being easily "taken in" was a general one relating to their "critical faculties". However, even as a general reference, it is remarkable that Teilhard used it at all in the context of a letter concerning Piltdown in particular. Teilhard's reference to Boule and Obermaier not being easily "taken in" does not necessarily remove an aura of suspicion against him. Is it not possible that Teilhard actually wanted Boule and Obermaier, both highly respected, to expose Piltdown for what it really was?

One item of interest which I raised previously in PALNEWS (7,2: 26-34) and in *Current Anthropology* (Thackeray 1992: 587-589), requires comment and correction. There had been a suggestion that Teilhard and his colleague Pelletier be prevented from exploring fossil sites in Sussex. This piece of information comes from Woodward (1948:9) in his little book called "The Earliest Englishman". Millar (1974) had also referred to it in his book called "The Piltdown Men". From Millar's account, read many years ago, I had obtained a mistaken impression that it was Woodward himself who had considered preventing Teilhard from having access to the sites. In actual fact, it was Woodward who simply recorded the fact that the *workmen* were offended by the presence of the two Frenchmen, who were not giving them tips; they had spoken to Dawson, who relayed the matter to Woodward, who recorded the fact that *there had been a suggestion that Teilhard and his friend Felix be barred from entering palaeontological sites in the area.*

Teilhard, as a bright but bored theological student at Ore Place near Piltdown, had apparently used his interest in palaeontology as one pretext to get out of the seminary. Woodward and/or Dawson could have relayed to Teilhard the potential threat (originating from workmen) to prevent him from collecting fossils. In response to this, was Teilhard himself responsible for planting at least some of the Piltdown pieces, as a joke partly on Woodward (who has been described as a man without a sense of humour), on Dawson (whom Teilhard had found amusing), and even on the workmen who had been responsible for raising the possibility of preventing Teilhard from fossil-hunting? If so, Teilhard may have subsequently wanted to expose the joke by "finding" the canine, without exposing himself as the joker.

If Teilhard really did "discover" the canine for the sake of exposing a joke, he could have felt confident that his Professor in France, Marcellin Boule, would have adopted a sceptical attitude sufficiently strong to help with the exposure of the Piltdown "hoax", without Teilhard having to take further action himself.

One may never prove that Teilhard was the prime mover in the case of Piltdown. One may always hope that new evidence may emerge to clear him. However, the facts presented above, together with Teilhard's apparent *embarrassment and unwillingness to talk much about the matter after Oakley's exposure of the hoax by means of chemical analyses* (Spencer 1990; Thackeray 1991) remain highly suggestive that Teilhard de Chardin was not an innocent bystander at a time when he collected fossils as a bright but bored young theological student close to Piltdown where he spent four years of his life prior to taking up a career in palaeontology, or when he was a young student under Boule who might well have dissociated himself from Teilhard had the latter in fact admitted to being responsible for much of what went on at Piltdown, even if it was intended initially as a joke.

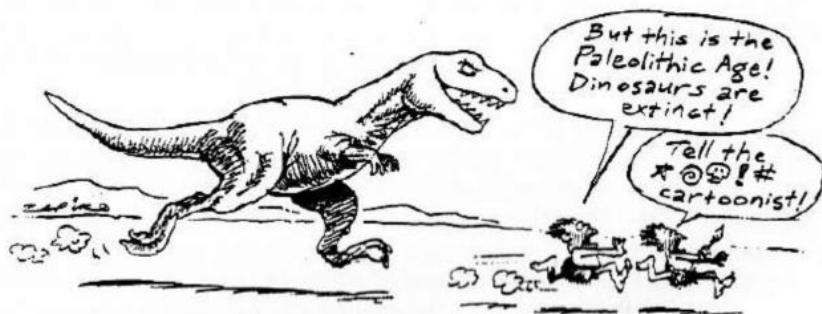
I thank Professor P.V. Tobias for his useful and critical comments on views expressed previously. Chris Stringer of the Natural History Museum kindly gave me the opportunity to look at the Piltdown material.

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STYLE september 93

Accolades for palaeontologist James Kitching.

Receives third top award for his work

James does it again!! This was the main newspaper headline of the "Graaff-Reinet Advertiser" on 26 July 1993 and the following extract is the lead paragraph to this story. Ed.

On Tuesday (July 6), at a dinner of the Zoological Society of South Africa, Professor James Kitching was awarded the Gold Medal of the Zoological Society of South Africa. Earlier this year he was awarded the Draper Memorial Medal by the Geological Society of S.A. for the enormous contribution he has made to the advancement of palaeontological knowledge in South Africa. Last year he was made an honorary life member of the Palaeontological Society of S.A. All of these three are the highest awards that can be bestowed by these societies on any of their members and it is a remarkable achievement that Professor Kitching has been awarded all these accolades. In fact he is the first person to have achieved this distinction.

A lengthy article follows in which the many achievements of James Kitching are recorded. I haven't reproduced the article here in full as it was quite long. I would, however, refer you to Pal News Vol.9(1), Dec.1992 p.10, for more detail about this remarkable man. Ed.

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PUBLICITY REGARDING FOSSIL FINDS

The National Monuments Council is concerned that although the publicity surrounding fossil finds in South Africa as a spin-off from "Jurassic Park" is catching the public imagination, our impression is that no professional palaeontologists who have been interviewed have mentioned the fact that fossils may only be collected with a permit from the NMC. It would be much appreciated if all palaeontologists would mention this whenever interviewed, either for newspapers, magazines, radio or TV. It should be emphasised that fossils are not a saleable commodity and should be in museums or universities, not in private hands! *Dr Janette Deacon - National Monuments Council.*

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Conference in honour of Mary Leakey, held in Tanzania in August 1993. Francis Thackeray

A very successful and enjoyable conference in honour of Dr Mary Leakey, wife of the late Louis Leakey, was held in Arusha, Tanzania in August this year. It brought together many palaeoanthropologists and palaeoecologists from many countries of the world, and it was indeed a very special conference for more than 10 South Africans who were given a warm welcome.

On behalf of all of the South Africans who attended the conference and who took part in the excellent excursions to Olduvai and Laetoli, I would like to thank Professor Magori, Dr Masao and all other members of the organising committee, for all that they did to make the conference such a success. It is our hope that Dr Mary Leakey and others from East Africa will visit South Africa in the near future.

Francis Thackeray

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News from BPI Palaeontology, Wits University - Marion Bamford.

The past six months have been busy with lecturing for the BPI staff but there has been time for research as well. James Kitching spent four weeks in the field in the *Tapinocephalus* Assemblage Zone in an area between Beaufort West and Nelspoort. He discovered a few new dinocephalian localities in an area currently mapped as the Poortjie member. Bruce Rubidge, accompanied by Richard Lewis, David Dilkes, Pepsin Mukarela, Elizabeth Latimer and Heidi Fourie, joined James for the last few days of his field trip. They then all proceeded to the Laingsburg area to start excavating a dinocephalian which James had discovered last year.

Amongst the prize fossils collected by James Kitching was the skull roof of the rare dinocephalian *Syracocephalus*. Juri van den Heever and Bruce Rubidge have re-examined the cranial morphology of this genus and their manuscript is almost complete. The new specimen is being prepared and should provide valuable additional information.

Heidi Fourie recently had the opportunity to attend the third Symposium on Image Analysis and Processing at Wits University in September where she presented a paper on the 3-D image analysis of the cranium of *Emydops*. The conference was organised by the department of Mathematics and the other speakers came from a very wide variety of disciplines.

During August, while on holiday in Britain, Heidi visited the Natural History Museum in London, to study their postcranial material of therocephalians. Heidi's other PhD work is progressing well and the mammoth task of preparing the postcranium of an *Ictidosuchops* sp. is nearly complete. The morphological description of the postcranium of a pristerognathid will be completed during a visit to the SAM early next year. The next task will be to prepare and describe a baurioid.

Marion Bamford continues with her studies of fossil wood from all over southern Africa. A collection of wood from Bruce Rubidge's study area is beautifully preserved and has not been described before. The Tertiary wood from several onshore and offshore localities is also interesting from a phytogeographic point of view.

Marion - 4 December 1993.

News from Chris Gow - BPI

During October this year I attended the SVP and Non-Marine Triassic Symposia in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Local VP's were represented by Roger Smith, Anusuya Chinsamy-Turan (currently resident in the US), one-time local Fred Grine and myself. The SVP meeting was the biggest ever, with 741 delegates, and this of course meant parallel Mesozoic and Quaternary sessions with attendant inevitable tough choices. The Triassic meeting by contrast had only in the region of 150 delegates, who could thus be present at all sessions.

Each meeting was good in its own way. At SVP one got to meet everyone in VP in the US, from graduate students up, and to get to know what everyone does. The Triassic meeting was a first, and we would all hope, the first of many. Incidentally I thought that the standard of presentations delivered at both meetings by Anusuya and Roger was at least as good as any other.

What we really went for of course was the post Symposium excursion through the Triassic of New Mexico and Arizona. The American southwest is high ($\pm 5000'$), sparsely inhabited, semi-desert, Indian country, with a scattering of mountain peaks rising over 10 000', thus snow covered in winter and feeding perennial rivers like the Rio Grande. This vast area is ecologically impoverished by comparison with southern Africa. The terrestrial Triassic rocks are truly impressive, the down side being the very deep weathering.

The trip took us to Ghost Ranch (phytosaur and theropod country), where one could buy tapes of lovely Indian wooden flute music. Flashing past some superb terrestrial Cretaceous outcrops, via stops such as Holbrook and Gallup, an amphibian locality at Geronimo's Store, the Painted Desert, Petrified Forest National Park and Meteor Crater. The last morning was devoted to the Grand Canyon: it is the greatest show on earth. Memorable too is the Indian craftwork - silver, turquoise, coral, mats, pottery, etc., but at R3,40 to the US\$, we could mostly just look. (A beer across the counter cost a shade over R10.) Heartfelt thanks to Spencer Lucas, Michael Morales, Adrian Hunt and many others who made the whole exercise so enjoyable.

Chris Gow - 4 December 1993

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News from Ann Cadman - BPI

Our palynology students are all "going great guns" on their various projects. Grigor Aitken's MSc dissertation on the number 5 Seam, Witbank and Highveld Coalfields, is at the binders right now. Sue de Villiers is in the final stage of labour with her masters on Namaqualand Tertiary sediments. Rob Fox is relating pollen and sedimentology of the Lower Karoo in the south of Botswana. Rob is still in the early stages of his MSc, which is a part-time endeavour.

Marion Bamford, David Dilkes, Lars Juul and I recently spent a very enjoyable few days with Rob Fox and his wife Cecilia at their bush-camp near Jwaneng. We were taken to see a fossil plant site, where Marion was able to assist Rob with some *Glossopteris* identification. Then a highlight for Marion and myself was a trip to, or rather into, the diamond mine, an opencast pit of enormous dimensions.

Our trip to Jwaneng was momentous from another point of view as well. While we were there Cecilia produced the first and newest little Fox in the form of a bouncing young Tristan. Our very best wishes to Cecilia and Rob..... well done!

My other news is palynological but not palaeontological. I was lucky enough to attend an Allergology and Clinical Immunology conference in Rotterdam in September. My poster related atmospheric pollen counts to sales of antihistamines. Then in November I presented a paper at the National Association for Clean Air conference, near Brits, on "Health hazards of the airspora in the Vaal Triangle". I'm still working on the effect the angiosperms had on the demise of the dinosaurs!

Ann Cadman - 4 December 1993

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"Miss Hodgson, my wife doesn't understand pierodactyls."

News from Rhodes University, Grahamstown - Norton Hiller.

Robert Gess left the Devonian team at the end of September to go travelling round Australia but while there he will be picking the brains of several experts on Devonian fish. However, just before he left he turned up several specimens of a small fish that we have identified as a crossopterygian, probably belonging to the Coelacanthiformes. Given the connection between Grahamstown and coelacanths we just had to turn up an ancestor to "Old Four Legs"!

Robert's departure brought to an end a period of about nine months of steady collecting at our site, so until his return we are working on the material we have. Contact has been made with a number of overseas workers whom we hope will help us with identifications, especially of arthropod and algal specimens.

In September I was able to visit the western Cape and spend several enjoyable days in the field with John Almond. I returned eastwards laden with new specimens of Bokkeveld brachiopods. I must now find the time to work on them.

Sue Frost is continuing her work on the palaeosols of the Kirkwood Formation as well as keeping an eye out for more dinosaur bones. **Norton Hiller**

(Norton neglected to mention that he has sadly resigned from his professorial duties at Rhodes University and that he and his family will be moving to New Zealand early in the new year. I'm sure that I speak for all members when I say that we will surely miss his exuberant presence at PSSA meetings and his prolific brachiopod research in South Africa. Norton has however assured me that he will do all in his power to get back to the September PSSA '94 meeting - even if it is only to say good bye to his fossil friends - he'd better, because he is on the organising committee!!! Ed.)

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News from Basil Cooke - Canada (via Francis Thackeray).

Basil Cooke has drawn attention to the fact that there are very few South African palaeontologists who are members of the Society of Vertebrate Palaeontology. Anyone who is interested in joining could write to Ginny Watson, Secretary of the PSSA, Department of Palaeontology, Transvaal Museum, P.O. Box 413 Pretoria 0001, for further details.

Basil has also kindly sent the set of new Canadian stamps of dinosaurs, including *Massospondylus*, *Albertosaurus*, *Platecarpus* and *Styracosaurus* (see below). A set of these stamps has been forwarded to Ludwig Dohne, the PSSA Member who is South Africa's leading stamp collector with a palaeontological theme, and to Bruce Rubidge, Director of the BPI. Thanks Basil. *Francis Thackeray*

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From the Press

Dino-soar find

ITALIAN paleontologists in northern Brazil have uncovered wing remains of a prehistoric flying reptile dating from 110-million years ago, the Ligabue research centre announced yesterday.

Sunday Times 28.8.93

Dinosaur eggs sold

IN the year of *Jurassic Park*, dinosaurs are big business, as London auctioneers Bonhams discovered when a nest of 10 large eggs fetched £46,000 — more than twice their top estimate of £22,000. Together with a nest of five which went for £12,000, the eggs were bought by an American collector bidding by telephone.

The clutch of 10, between 70 million and 100 million years old, were laid by a sauropod, a large herbivore similar to the brontosaurus, and excavated three years ago at Xida in Hanan province, China, by Dutch amateur Jan Stobbe. "This seems a good time to share my enthusiasm with a public so much more aware of all things prehistoric," he said.

THE WEEKLY MAIL & GAZETTE
September 24th, 20th, 27th 1993

Dinosaur find knocks spots off film

By GREG NEALE: London
STEVEN SPIELBERG, cut your earl out. The vast dinosaur fossils of the American West have brown up a discovery that makes *Jurassic Park* seem like innocent fun. Palaeontologists at the Dinosaur National Monument in Utah are studying the headless skeleton of a previously unknown carnivorous

dinosaur — it would have weighed about a ton when alive, some 150-million years ago.

"When we first found it, we thought it was a previously identified species, an *Allosaurus*," said park palaeontologist Dan Chure. "Then we realised it wasn't, so we started calling it the *Noianallosaurus* — the Headless Wonder."

"When you consider that we have probably discovered barely 10 per cent of the dinosaurs that ever lived, it's still a tantalisingly sketchy picture. And we've been looking for a comparatively short period of time.

"My guess is we haven't even begun to find the most bizarre creatures yet," he said. — *The Telegraph, London*

From the Press

Film sparks interest

Herald Reporter

HOLLYWOOD'S popularisation of dinosaurs in the blockbuster Steven Spielberg film *Jurassic Park* is tipped to turn the Eastern Cape's unique *Algoasaurus* into a star.

The model of the dinosaur — which roamed the region millions of years ago and the bones of which were found in 1896 — has been painstakingly built by Port Elizabeth Museum's Barney Newman.

To authenticate his model Mr Newman was able to use bones found near Despatch, and identified as those of a dinosaur, by Dr Robert Broom, a paleontologist at the Albany Museum in Grahamstown.

He named it *Algoasaurus*.

The skeleton was painstakingly measured and recorded in the museum

books, although some of the bones were lost.

Now museum director Mike Raath, who is a member of the international Dinosaur Society, has renewed a plea to try and find the missing bones.

"It really is important that we find those bones for comparison with other finds being made, particularly in North America recently."

He's expecting even bigger queues of visitors to look at, and read up, about the dinosaur, "particularly when the film gets here".

It is scheduled for release in September.

"Part of the interest is their dramatic extinction virtually all at the same time around the world."

"Whatever it was must have been most spectacular because it wiped out big reptiles and other groups of animals as well."

EASTERN PROVINCE HERALD, FRIDAY

Stardom beckons for PE's dinosaur

CRAZY



WORLD

Dinosaurs are too old to be strictly kosher

JERUSALEM — Dinosaurs may be all the rage in the West but some rabbis in Israel say the prehistoric creatures are not kosher because dinosaur theory contradicts the biblical account of creation.

Popularised by Steven Spielberg's blockbuster movie *Jurassic Park*, dinosaurs are appearing on everything from toys and books to corporate logos.

But ultra-Orthodox rabbis want to withdraw the kosher certification of a dairy company that has begun using pictures of dinosaurs to promote its products.

"The dinosaur is portrayed as an animal that is millions of years old, even though it is known that the world was created only 5753 years ago," Rabbi Zvi Galner of the ultra-Orthodox Agudat Israel Party told the Israeli newspaper *Davar*.

□□□□

STAR ATTRACTION... Port Elizabeth ed by the dinosaur *Algoasaurus*. It measures 14 metres from head to tail.



Museum director Mike Raath is dwarfed by the dinosaur, which is 3.5 metres high and long. Picture: COLIN URQUHART

Latest hominid fossil find a 'honey hole'

■ BY ANITA ALLEN
SCIENCE WRITER

The discovery of an ancient hominid site, the eighth in South Africa, was announced yesterday at Wits University.

The site, named Driemeulen and situated 7 km north of the Sterkfontein Caves, was discovered by palaeontologist Dr Andre Keyser of Geological Survey in Pretoria.

Keyser also played a key role,

with Lee Berger, in the discovery last year of the country's seventh site, Gladysvale, 18 km from Sterkfontein.

Together these discoveries re-establish South Africa's pre-eminence on the world palaeontological map, Professor Phillip Tobias told an audience of nearly all the top researchers in the field in South Africa.

November has always been a significant month for South African palaeontologists, who usually gather at this time to com-

memorate the November 1924 discovery by Professor Raymond Dart of the Taung child, the first of the small-brained, upright-walking ape species to be found.

Keyser found the Driemeulen breccia deposits containing the fossils while exploring a disused lime quarry. Altogether the site consists of 20 "holes" and, after removing only 4 cu m of the breccia in the main cave, two right-side molars belonging to separate individuals were found.

Keyser said preliminary evi-

dence from the huge size of the molars indicated they belonged to the apeman species, *Australopithecus robustus*. This is the first site where specimens of this early ancestor of man has been found in South Africa since Dr Robert Broom's 1948 discovery at Swartkrans.

Keyser said the Driemeulen site was extremely fossil-rich.

"It's a honey hole indeed," he said. He estimates the age of the tooth fossils to be 1.8 million to 2 million years.

News from Roger Smith - South African Museum, Cape Town.

*5th International Conference on Fluvial Sedimentology held in Brisbane
21 June - 9 July 1993.*

This conference which is held every 4 years is concerned with all aspects of rivers both ancient and modern and is the meeting place for fluvial sedimentologists and geomorphologists from all over the world. This year the hosts were the University of Queensland in Brisbane. Some 300 delegates were attracted by the opportunity to visit some of the largest arid zone fluvial systems in the world as well as plenty of exposures of ancient fluvial rocks.

Before the conference, I joined 30 other geologists (from 10 different countries) on a week-long 3500km drive through the Eucalyptus bush of south-central Queensland looking at the sedimentology of Permian and Triassic (Karoo-aged) strata. The outcrops were rather limited (by Karoo standards) being mainly roadcuts but we were treated to some magnificent continuous exposures in the hanging walls of three open cast coal mines. The conference was held over 5 days with 2 parallel sessions so it was only possible to attend half of the presentations, but good scheduling prevented too many clashes. I gave a talk on the work that Tom Mason and I have been doing on modern arid zone rivers in the Central Namib entitled, "Flash flood sediments and ichnofacies of the Late Pleistocene Homeb Silts, Kuiseb River, Namibia." A full length report of this work was published in the special conference volume of *Sedimentary Geology* which was given to all registrants. Perhaps the most significant new development relating to the work that I am doing in the Karoo Basin came from British and American oil geologists who are successfully applying "sequence stratigraphy" to nonmarine successions similar to the Karoo Supergroup. At the closing session the South African contingent (x3) put together a short presentation on the reasons why the conference should come to Cape Town. The vote was overwhelmingly in our favour with Prof. Minter (UCT Geology) and myself as the conveners for the next meeting in 1997.

Before and after the conference I was able to visit several museums in Sydney and Brisbane. Of particular interest was "The Earth Exchange," an earth sciences museum housed in a converted 5-storey warehouse located in Sydney's popular waterfront area. Lavishly sponsored by mining companies, this museum was fully stocked with touch panel computer graphics and video stands, audio-visual, visual

and tactile displays. The highlight being a "rumble floor" simulation of the Sydney earthquake. I picked up some good ideas on new ways to display rocks from the "Formation" exhibit and some discovery room ideas from their "Doomed Dinosaurs, Mighty Meteorites" interactive display. An environmental education video projected onto a kaleidoscope of rotating mirrors forming an "Energy Sphere" was a simple and captivating way of getting the message across.

*SVP Meeting and Nonmarine Triassic Symposium, Albuquerque, New Mexico,
13-23 October 1993*

In October I attended the 53rd Annual Meeting of the Palaeontological Society of America in Albuquerque, New Mexico. This was followed by a 2-day Special Symposium and a 4-day field trip dedicated to the geology and fossils of nonmarine Triassic rocks of the world. The SVP meeting was held in a luxury hotel which accommodated most of the 470 delegates. Oral presentations were diligently limited to 20 minutes which for most was quite adequate but a few had to be forcibly removed from the podium. Unfortunately my range of interests cut across the 3 parallel sessions resulting in numerous clashes so that I occasionally resorted to attending only half of each talk. I was able to attend sessions on terrestrial faunas, pterosauria, dinosauria, taphonomy, trace fossils and Permo-Triassic biostratigraphy. The large array of poster presentations was a welcome respite from the darkness and frenzy of the session rooms. Presentations were generally of a high quality but I was amazed that the organisers had not provided a dual slide-projection facility which is the standard at most international conferences. Consequently, I had to re-organise my talk during the conference. An excellent taphonomy talk by Raymond Rogers from Chicago on time-averaging in terrestrial vertebrate fossil occurrences won the Romer Prize for the best student presentation. Another fruitful contact was made with an American student, Karen Chin, who is working on dinosaur coprolites, a topic that I'm currently researching in the Karoo Sequence. We plan to give a "double-header" presentation in two years time. My talk on palaeoenvironments of vertebrate trackway sites was well received and resulted in an invitation to lunch with 2 of the "big guns" of dinosaur tracking in America, Martin Lockley and Kevin Padian. Delegates were given the opportunity to wander around the exhibition area of the Museum of New Mexico with cocktails and tacos at each level. The displays are biased towards the earth sciences with a wealth of dinosaur material. A few of us were allowed into their collections to view, amongst other things, America's largest coprolite collection.

The organisers were thoughtful enough to give us a day off between conferences to do our laundry and explore the "old town" markets. I joined Chris Gow, Fred Grine and Anusuya Chinsamy for a day in Santa Fe where we treated ourselves to the genuine heartburn of Tex-Mex cuisine. The nonmarine Triassic symposium attracted 150 delegates from at least 20 countries. There were 54 talks spread over 2 days which allowed for much more discussion time than the SVP meeting, and in a more relaxed atmosphere. The talks dealt with topics such as sedimentology, stratigraphy, P-Tr boundary, palaeobotany, vertebrate taxonomy and taphonomy of terrestrial Triassic sediments. I presented the results of some work that I've just written-up on the changes that took place in the landscape and fauna during the Permian-Triassic transition in the main Karoo Basin. I was surprised to learn (through an interpreter) that a very similar transition occurs in China and it could therefore be an important sequence for global correlation.

Following the symposium a group of 55 delegates were taken on a 4-day field trip through New Mexico and Arizona to look at Triassic rocks and fossils. Travelling in rather cramped minibuses with the minimum of luggage we drove a tortuous route from Albuquerque to Flagstaff. We stopped at several well-known dinosaur quarries including the *Coelophysis* quarry at Ghost Ranch. Crossing the Colorado Plateau Chris and I were impressed by its similarity to the upper Karoo landscape, except that thankfully the Karoo is not dotted with extinct uranium mines. Outcrops of dinosaur-bearing strata extend for 100's of kilometres providing good hunting grounds for professional collectors. Scenic diversions on the way included the Petrified Forest National Park, Meteor Crater and the Grand Canyon.

Back in the office, the Beaufort Group coprolite collection has been sectioned and is ready for some detailed analysis, the "nest of prolacertids" reported previously has recently been identified by Sue Evans as a bunch of at least 7 juvenile Younginids and I'm still unconvinced about the Elliot "termitaria".

Plans for next year include short field trips to Estcourt and Bethulie districts to finish off the work started last year on the P-Tr boundary sedimentary environments and fossils. A last trip to Clocolan to finish off the Elliot paleosols and the *Trirylodon* "acme" denudation surface. Hopefully, with the support of Maarten De Wit and Lou Ashwell, a full 10 days fieldwork in Madagascar on the

Sakamena Group and possibly a short trip to Namibia to help Callum Ross with the Miocene sediments there.

Roger Smith

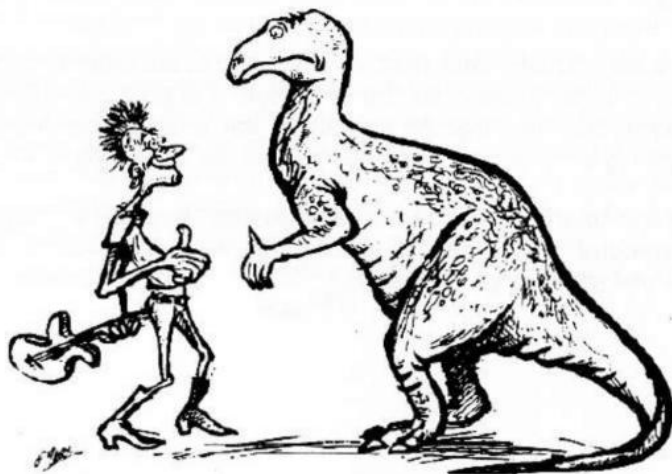
RECENT PUBLICATIONS:

Smith R.M.H., Mason T.R. and Ward J.D., 1993, Flash-flood sediments and ichnofacies of the Late Pleistocene Homeb Silts, Kuiseb River, Namibia. *Sedimentary Geology*, 85, p.579-599.

Smith R.M.H., Eriksson P.G., and Botha W.J., 1993, A review of the stratigraphy and sedimentary environments of the Karoo-aged basins of Southern Africa. *Journal of African Earth Sciences*, 16 (1/2), p. 143-169.

Smith R.M.H., 1993, Sedimentology and ichnology of floodplain paleosurfaces in the Beaufort Group (Late Permian), Karoo Sequence, South Africa. *Palaaios*, 8, p.339-357.

oOo



News from Johann Welman - National Museum, Bloemfontein.

Finding the Skull of *Euskelosaurus*

On the 16th of September 1993 the first skull of a large prosauropod dinosaur, associated with an almost complete skeleton was uncovered on the farm Damplaats of Mr Ken Stofberg in the Ladybrand district. The skull is about 25cm long and the overall length of the animal is about 4,5m. The find followed a number of days of excavating in very resistant calcified siltstone by members of the Palaeontology Department of the National Museum, including Messrs Joël Mohoi and John Nyaphuli.

It is not known who discovered the specimen more than 20 years ago but it was pointed out to Johann Welman by Prof. James Kitching at the end of 1991. Only four caudal vertebrae were exposed at the time. In March 1993 Johann visited the site again with overseas visitors and noticed that part of the fossil was being eroded away and that in the next rainy season serious damage would occur. Since articulated specimens from the *Euskelosaurus* range zone are very seldom found, the potential importance of the specimen was realized. After discussions with other interested parties, Mr Stofberg asked the National Museum to excavate the fossil.

Since the specimen came from the lower half of the Elliot Formation, which is dated as Upper Triassic, the find of the skull is of great scientific interest. It was at about this time that the saurischian and ornithischian dinosaurs evolved. Hopefully the skull may shed some light on the monophyly of the dinosaurs.

The find coincided with the release of the film "Jurassic Park" and the local and international media gave it, as well as the importance of South African palaeontology, very good coverage.

Johann Welman

oOo

News from Caroline Northwood - La Trobe University, Australia.

Our Queensland field trip was reasonably successful. There has been little or no rain at the sites in three years, so pickings were not as rich as we had hoped.

Anne has left on another whirlwind tour of the world's temnospondyls. This time she's inspecting the Argentinian chigutisaur before heading off to the SVP meeting and the Non-Marine Triassic Terrestrial Ecosystems conference, both in Albuquerque. No doubt she will fill you in on the details in the next newsletter.

Meanwhile Natalie and I are remaining in Melbourne. Eric, the pliosaur (recently sold by an opal dealer and purchased for the Australian Museum by the public, after a desperate fund raising appeal to prevent it being sold outside Australia) is about to go on a tour of the Australian Museums, so Natalie has been asked to finish describing it. I've begun a study of the coprolites from the Arcadia Formation, and was very interested in an article in the last *Pal News* about Dinosaur coprolites in California being turned into jewellery. I'm sure Early Triassic tetrapod poo is just as good, anyone interested??

Australia is caught up in "Jurassic Park hype" at the moment. Every dinosaur expert in Australia has been on one current affairs program or another and there have been a number of dinosaur documentaries, including the BBC production which failed to even mention the existence of Australia! Pat and Tom Rich have organised a magnificent display of Russian dinosaurs and other fossils to coincide with the movie, and we are delighted that several of our Russian colleagues will tour with their fossils. The Rich's have just released a new coffee table book 'Wildlife of Gondwana'. Finally, Australia Post is getting in on the bandwagon with the release of a set of dinosaur stamps on the 1st October.

Caroline Northwood - 10 September 1993.

oOo

Dinosaurs of Africa



Fossil Philately - Billy de Klerk

New stamp issues with a fossil theme are being released far more regularly than in the past and I'm just not able to keep up with what the different countries are producing. Here are a couple that I am aware of:-

CANADA - Set of 4 stamps of 43c each depicting
Massospondylus - Dinosaur, Jurassic Period.
Styracosaurus - Dinosaur, Cretaceous Period.
Albertosaurus - Dinosaur, Cretaceous Period.
Platecarpus - Marine Reptile, Cretaceous Period.



TANZANIA - 16 colourful stamps depicting "Dinosaurs of Africa" each 100/-.

<i>Iguanodon</i>	<i>Saltasaurus</i>	<i>Cetiosaurus</i>	<i>Camarasaurus</i>
<i>Spinosaurus</i>	<i>Stegosaurus</i>	<i>Allosaurus</i>	<i>Ceratopsaurus</i>
<i>Lesothosaurus</i>	<i>Anchisaurus</i>	<i>Ornithomimus</i>	<i>Baronyx</i>
<i>Pachycephalosaurus</i>	<i>Dryosaurus</i>	<i>Coelophysis</i>	<i>Heterodontosaurus</i>

After some hard trading I was able to extract a sheet of these stamps from Francis Thackeray and are shown on the opposite page.

TRANSKEI - The third set of stamps showing fossils of the Transkei was issued on 18 June 1993 (Bizana). Apart from the illustrations on the four stamps the commemorative first day cover also depicts two *Massospondylus* in different postures. The four stamps include:

Fabrosaurus - 45c

Diictodon - 65c

Chasmatosaurus - 85c

Rubidgea - R1.05

AUSTRALIA - I recently received a letter with a 45c stamp depicting a *Leaellynasaura* which must form part of the new 1 October 1993 series which Caroline Northwood mentioned earlier. Definitely must get a set!

oOo



PALAUVER

This column gets its name from the verb, *palaver*, "to discuss, to jaw" (O.E.D.); it is a column in which anybody can chew on any subject, just as anybody can (if they dared or cared) on Hyde Park Corner in London. In this issue, Colin MacRae gets his teeth into the heady subject of decapitation and "recapitation".



ROGER THE DODGER - A Tale of the Brazen Head Hunter.

I was somewhat pleased to read in the recent issue of Pal News Vol. 9(2) about the "recapitating" of the *Bradysaurus* destined to permanently reside in the Karoo National Park in Beaufort West. Is this not the stuff that palaeontological fairy tales are made of? What intrigued me, however, was the reference to the skull of this unfortunate beast that was "finally tracked down to an un-numbered specimen in the fossil store of the Geological Survey in Silverton". I am sure that the readers of Pal News were pleasantly relieved to have read that this skull was rediscovered by some gallant Don Quixote and, naturally, equally horrified that this specimen was traced to the fossil store of the Geological Survey. Let me assure all those readers that I, as head of the Palaeontology Section of the Geological Survey and ultimately responsible for the fossil collection, fully empathise with them - I was also horrified.

Fortunately every horror story has some historical background, and predictably so has this one. It all started one morning when I received a telephone call from Cape Town. Hi this is Roger... and after some polite chit chat the subject was broached about this problem *Bradysaurus* that he was excavating on the farm Spes Bona. The problem was that the skull was missing. The farmer clearly remembers that some guy, he can remember that he was english speaking, in a Ford F250



The first step was to check the 1:50 000 topo maps of the farm Spes Bona (Riet Kuil 307) and the card index catalogue. Well you can imagine my surprise when on the map there was a pencil dot on the relevant farm indicating the discovery of a fossil with a note "*Bradysaurus*", in, hold your breath, Roger Smith's handwriting. The number assigned to this fossil was S 260 and once again you can imagine my amusement when the catalogue card S 260 documented the fossil as *Bradysaurus*, the locality as Spes Bona and clearly recorded the collector as R M H Smith. Armed with this somewhat potentially embarrassing information I telephoned Roger in Cape Town. To avoid any misunderstandings, before revealing my information, I asked Roger to describe the location of his fossil. He proceeded to describe in exact terms the location of fossil S.260. Well you can imagine the stunned silence when I revealed the information I had at my disposal.

This would have been a rather happy ending to the horror story, but as you all know, nightmares carry on just at the point when one wants them to end. I cheerfully assured my somewhat confused colleague that I will arrange for my staff to zip down to the fossil store, retrieve the *Bradysaurus* skull numbered S 260 and with pleasure make arrangements for a happy reunion of head, Head Hunter, and hapless "Jezebel". Well you can imagine my horror when the fossil store was turned upside down and fossil S 260 could not be located. *This* is the stuff palaeontological nightmares are made of! I immediately informed Roger and he arranged to have a photograph made of the skull from the super 8 cine film. Well after a second instruction to FIND THAT FOSSIL returned empty handed. I decided that it was time to have a look myself. Well it did not take me long, in fact less than 5 minutes, to realize that one of our articulated *Bradysaurus* skeletons in the fossil store was in the fortunate and privileged position of having been blessed with double the normal cranial capacity of most of its peers. The problem, though, was that this additional capacity was located at posterior end of the skeleton. The skull at the tail end of the skeleton, I am sure you have all guessed, had no number. Some enterprising curator must have felt sorry for this poor un-numbered orphan of a skull and accommodated it in what he felt to be almost comfortable position at the posterior end of a numbered specimen. By now I had the photograph of the hunted head and it compared wart for wart with the orphaned skull *sans nombre*. Well this is where one thinks that the nightmare ends, but alas, the nightmare drags on.

Having been confronted with the potentially embarrassing evidence of the map and catalogue card information, Roger Smith proceeded to publish, some two months later, a very critical report in Pal News Vol. 8(2) p. 24, claiming that "a fossil collector working for the Geological Survey who then "robbed" the skeleton of its skull". He appears to have been absolutely confident that he had not committed this heinous head hunting crime. After I had successfully located the skull and willingly sent it to the Karoo Park I requested that Roger explain the situation and publish an apology correcting his accusations in the previous Pal News issue. Well an apology, predictably tucked away (p.18) in his report followed in the next issue (Vol. 9 (1). This would have been a very suitable point to end the nightmare. I was, and I would venture to say predictably, angered when in the latest issue of our newsletter I read the statement "... was finally tracked down to an un-numbered specimen in the fossil store of the Geological Survey in Silvertown" (Pal News Vol. 8 (2) p.23). Someone not knowing the full tale or not having read the apology in the previous issue could justifiably be left with a very negative impression of the Survey's collecting and curation practices. One was left asking what was the motive for including this statement.

Roger Smith clearly collected the specimen in question whilst in the employ of the Geological Survey. Why he cannot remember collecting the skull, or why the farmer did not recognise him is an absolute mystery to me. When I went on my first field collecting trip Roger was assigned the task of teaching me the ropes. One of the first issues he drummed into me was that head hunting was strictly forbidden by Dr Andre Keyser (project leader at that time). Roger was fully aware that this practice was forbidden. That the specimen was un-numbered, again totally contrary to collecting policy of the Geological Survey, probably reflects sloppy field collecting practice. Fortunately one can always blame the odd bump in transit or a preparator who could have conveniently "removed" the number.

Well there are the facts of the saga of the brazen Head Hunter of the Karoo. You judge for yourself. The skull is re-united with the skeleton, lets hope this nightmare now ends.

Colin MacRae

Couple fight over old bones

Sunday Times Reporter
London

A COUPLE are locked in a R49 000 divorce wrangle — over the bones of a dinosaur.

Keith Simmonds spent 10 years digging up the remains of the 125-million-year-old Theropod. Then his wife, Jenny, a dinosaur fanatic like him, walked out.

Now she is suing him for half of his estate — including a share of the £10 000 (about R49 000) a museum offered for the 9.1m long monster.

Father-of-two Keith, 45, of Brightstone, Isle of Wight, said: "I didn't want to sell the bones. I intended giving them to the museum, but the divorce means I have to raise money.

Appeal

"Everything has to be sold or split up, and the bones were part of my estate."

The Isle of Wight Geology Museum launched a public appeal for cash to buy the Theropod. Experts say it is of vital scientific importance because it is a type of dinosaur never found before in the area.

Keith said: "The public appeal was against my principles. I didn't feel that the islanders should have to pay for their own heritage, but I am being forced into it."

Jenny, who now lives alone on the island, was unavailable for comment.



"Cummings! Schneider! You've got plenty of research to work on... and for the last time stop playing with those plastic models!"

It's the father of all crabs

By ROGER HIGHFIELD
London

A FOSSIL, 550 million years old, has been discovered. And it could be the ancient ancestor of crabs, scorpions and spiders.

"It is the possible ancestor of a very broad range of animals that are alive today," said Mr Graham Budd, the researcher at Cambridge University who identified the fossil this week.

In the journal *Nature*, Mr Budd said he was fortunate in his research: there is only one good specimen, the two halves of which were retrieved during two separate expeditions to Greenland by British and Danish scientists.

Related

The creature measured about 18cm in length, had two spiny tails, frilly front appendages that could be claws, stumpy unsegmented limbs and gills.

Mr Budd believes it is — or is closely related to — the great grandfather of crabs, crustacea, spiders, scorpions, the extinct trilobites, and unusual caterpillar-like creatures called lobopods, found only in the southern hemisphere.

Mr Budd decided to name the creature after the Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard, dubbing it *Kerygmachela kierkegaardi*. — *The Telegraph, London*

CONFERENCE

* 8th PSSA Conference

Rhodes University & Albany Museum, Grahamstown - *September 1994*

Contact: Prof Norton Hiller, Geology Dept., Rhodes University,
Grahamstown, 6140, Tel. (0461) 22023 Fax 29715.

OR Dr Billy de Klerk, Albany Museum, Somerset Street,
Grahamstown, 6140, Tel. (0461) 22312 Fax 22398.

Reminder: Deadline for contributions for the next issue of PAL News is

10 June 1994