




SAHRA Report




Bolt's Farm-Greensleeves (2010-2013) Permit renewal (2013-2016).

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Introduction

Bolt's Farm is a fossiliferous area in the Cradle of Humankind (recognized as World Heritage in 1999 by the UNESCO). Bolt's Farm used to be one large property. Today, it is spread across three properties: Klinkert's, Greensleeves and Main Quarry (some sites such as pit 10 were destroyed due to the quarry activity). The HRU team is currently involved only in Klinkert's and Greensleeves. Bolt's Farm cannot be considered as a unique homogeneous site as classically known in the literature. It is a huge and complex karstic network with numerous deposits (fossiliferous or sterile) we call locus (plural, loci). Even though each locus of Bolt's Farm is part of this network, they must be interpreted separately because their geological context and their age are different. It might be compared with the different caves and deposits constituting Sterkfontein. Bolt's Farm would be at a later stage of erosion, most of the caves and deposits are now exposed.

Bolt's Farm is known for its fauna, especially for its carnivores but also for the fact that this area yielded the oldest site of the Cradle of Humankind (Waypoint 160, about 4 to 4.5 Myr). Since the first studies undertaken by Broom in 1936, the research in this area has been conducted irregularly until 2006 when funded collaboration projects started again and 2007 when the HRU (HOPE Research Unit) was created in the Plio-Pleistocene Section of the Vertebrate Department of the D.N.M.N.H., Ditsong: National Museum of Natural History (formerly Transvaal Museum). Prior to 1996, most of the collection is scattered throughout several institutions. For example, the material recovered between 1947 and 1948 by the California African Expedition is currently housed at the University of California, at the D.N.M.N.H. at Pretoria and at the University of Witwatersrand at Johannesburg. Since 1996, all the material coming from Bolt's Farm is stored at the D.N.M.N.H.

Bolt's Farm comprises more than 30 fossiliferous loci of different age, from about 4.5 to about 0.9 My, and size (the HRU team focuses its efforts only on the most important). Bolt's Farm represents the longest chronological sequence in the Cradle of Humankind that can be compared to East Africa. During such a long period of time, climatic changes took place, the environment changed, the hominids and the associated faunas had to adapt to these changes.

History of Bolt's Farm

The history of past discoveries on Bolt's Farm is complex. Researches in this fossiliferous area were undertaken irregularly since the first studies by R. Broom, in 1936, until now and the current studies conducted by our team, the HRU (HOPE (Human Origins and Past Environments) Research Unit).

1936-1951. Robert Broom and Bolt's Farm.

Dr. R. Broom worked as soon as 1936 at Bolt's Farm (Broom, 1937; Cooke, 1991), the same year than the discovery of the first *Australopithecus* at Sterkfontein (holotype of *Plesianthropus*). He described several holotypes from Bolt's Farm such as *Machaerodus transvaalensis* (Broom, 1939), *Felis shawi* (Broom, 1948), *Elephantulus antiquus* (Broom, 1948), *Atelerix major* (Broom 1937, 1948) and *Crossarchus transvaalensis* (Broom, 1937, 1939). These fossils, as well as beautiful other pieces such as a cranium of suid (Broom, 1937, 1948; Cooke, 1993a), are stored at the D.N.M.N.H. but the exact loci they are coming from within Bolt's Farm remain unknown.

1947-1948. California African Expedition.

Most of the information available comes from this period. Dr. C. Camp (1948) was the leader of this expedition and undertook a systematic collecting of breccias from each fossiliferous

locus of Bolt's Farm with the help of Dr. F. E. Peabody; these sites are indicated by pit numbers. Most of the blocks of breccia and most of the fossils are still in the United States. Several pieces were donated to the D.N.M.N.H. but they represent a very small portion of the whole collection. All the fossils were collected with precise information concerning the context of the place of the discovery. Thus, H.B.S. Cooke (1991) published a map showing all the sites of the Bolt's Farm area as well as information concerning the fossil content for each site. He described some fossils belonging to carnivores (Cooke, 1991), suids (Cooke, 1993a), proboscidean (Cooke, 1993b), and antelopes (Cooke 1981, 1991, 1993b, 1996), supplemented by a study of primates (Freedman, 1957, 1965).

Late 80's. Ripamonti fieldwork.

In the 80's, Dr. U. Ripamonti from the University of Witwatersrand collected some blocks of breccia from the Main Quarry (correspond to pit 10 of the California African Expedition). This material was not published except for one publication concerning a primate jaw which was attributed to *Theropithecus* (Gilbert, 2007). During the same period, A. Hughes collected some material in the Main Quarry area but with no exact locality information. This material was stored at the Sterkfontein Research site and part of it is now at the BPI (Cooke, 1993).

1996-1999. Palaeontology Expedition to South Africa (PESA).

During this period, some fieldwork and collecting was undertaken by a French team associated with the Palaeontology Expedition to South Africa (PESA). In 1996, Waypoint 160 was discovered by B. Senut, M. Pickford and J. Michaux. Between 1997 and 1999, F. S en egas, with the help of A. Keyser, collected some more blocks from Waypoint 160 and Bridge Cave (pit 7). This material was studied as part of a Ph.D dissertation (S en egas, 2000). A new taxon, *Boltimys broomi*, was recognized from Waypoint 160 (S en egas & Michaux, 2000). Two new species, *Eurytomys bolti* (S en egas & Avery, 1998) and *Petromus antiquus* (S en egas, 2004), from the same locus were also described; they are of particular interest in biochronology and palaeoenvironmental reconstructions.

2001-2003. Firsts works of HOPE at Bolt's Farm.

Since the creation of the HOPE (Human Origins and Past Environments) project in 2001, a more systematic and exhaustive study has been undertaken at Bolt's Farm. Between 2001 and 2003, the HOPE team focused on the fossiliferous loci indicated by H.B.S. Cooke in 1991. The sites were located with a GPS (grid WGS 84) and the new coordinates were published (S en egas *et al.*, 2002). Two new sites were discovered (Alcelaphine site and Femur Dump). Collecting was done on the mine dumps of the following loci: pit 14, pit 6, pit 4, Alcelaphine site and more specifically Waypoint 160 and Femur Dump.

Since 2006. The HRU and Bolt's Farm.

From 2003 to 2006, the collecting continued episodically at Bolt's Farm. Since 2006, the activities of prospecting at Bolt's Farm are perennial, which allowed the discovery of many new loci. So far, three consecutive projects and funding allowed the constant activity at Bolt's Farm: 1) PAI PROTEA France-South Africa "Palaeoanthropology and Palaeoenvironmental studies in South Africa " financed by the NRF (National Research Foundation) in South Africa, and Ministries for Research and the Foreign Affairs in France between 2006-2007; 2) PICS CNRS-NRF "Plio-Pleistocene hominids and palaeoenvironments of the Cradle of Humankind (South Africa)" from 2008 to 2010; and 3) LIA (Associate International Laboratory) n 1047 of CNRS or HOMEN "HOMinids and ENvironments: evolution of plio-pleistocene biodiversity (Cradle of Humankind, South Africa)" since 2011.

In 2007, the HRU (Hope Research Unit) was created at the Ditsong: National Museum of Natural History, a laboratory dedicated mainly to the research on Bolt's Farm and in which

the collection of fossils are stored. All the loci were systematically visited and sampled if fossiliferous breccia was present. HRU is currently publishing the results (see HRU Bibliography and activities concerning Bolt's Farm).

The location of the material collected before 1996.

Prior to the beginning of the South-African-French collaboration through PESA, in 1996,, most of the collection was scattered throughout several institutions. While all the material collected by R. Broom is deposited at the Ditsong National Museum of Natural History, most of the material recovered between 1947 and 1948 by the California African Expedition is still currently housed at the University of California. Some specimens were brought back at the DNMNH such as the skull of *Dinofelis* from Pit 23 (Bolt's Farm-Kinklert) or the *Phacochoerus* from Pit 3 (Bolt's Farm-Greensleeves). Later, most of the primate collection was given back to the Medical school of the University of Witwatersrand, with for example the skull of *Parapapio* (BF43) and of *Cercopithecoides* (BF42) from pit 23. There are still un-prepared blocks of breccia and fossils from Bolt's Farm stored at the University of California Museum.

The material from the Main Quarry is scattered between the DNMNH, the Sterkfontein Research site and the BPI. During the 40's or/and 50's, a miner named Fourie collected a lot of blocks of breccias in the area between Swartkrans and Bolt's Farm and sold them (personal communication R. Clarke) but the exact provenance is unknown. The prefix "BF" was written on all the blocks collected by A. Hughes and Fourie. One block with an hominid tooth (BF????) is currently in the collection of the Medical School from the University of Witwatersrand. Some BF blocks ended up in the Geological Survey of Namibia after an exchange with the University of Witwatersrand.

Since 1996, all the material collected both at Bolt's Farm-Kinklert and Bolt's Farm-Greensleeves is housed only in the Plio-Pleistocene section of the DNMNH.

Activity report for 2010-2013.

The Bolt's Farm area is located on two properties, Klinkert's and Grensleeves. There are two SARAH permits, one for each property, to cover the whole area. The Greensleeves permit is expiring in 2013 and has to be renewed. The two principal investigators are Stephany Potze of the Ditsong: National Museum of Natural History at Pretoria and Dr Dominique Gommery of UPR 2147 of CNRS at Paris.

OPENING OF THE NEW PREPARATION LABORATORY.

The Ditsong National Museum of Natural History (DNMNH) has a long experience in acid preparation since the middle of the 20th century with J. T. Robinson, E. Vbra, D. Panagos, C. K. Brain and J. F. Thackeray. Acid preparation appears to be more effective and less damaging than mechanical preparation for the plio-pleistocene material from the fossiliferous breccia found at the different sites in the Cradle of Humankind. It especially preserves the microfauna (the very tiny bones and teeth of rodents, bats, insectivores, reptiles,...) which is very important to reconstruct the palaeoenvironment in which the hominids lived. After several years on hold, acid preparation started again in the Plio-Pleistocene section of the DNMNH when Lazarus Kgasi was appointed as senior preparator in 2008. The huge quantity of fossiliferous breccias yielded by the sites of the Cradle of Humankind sites was too big to be prepared in the existing inside laboratory.

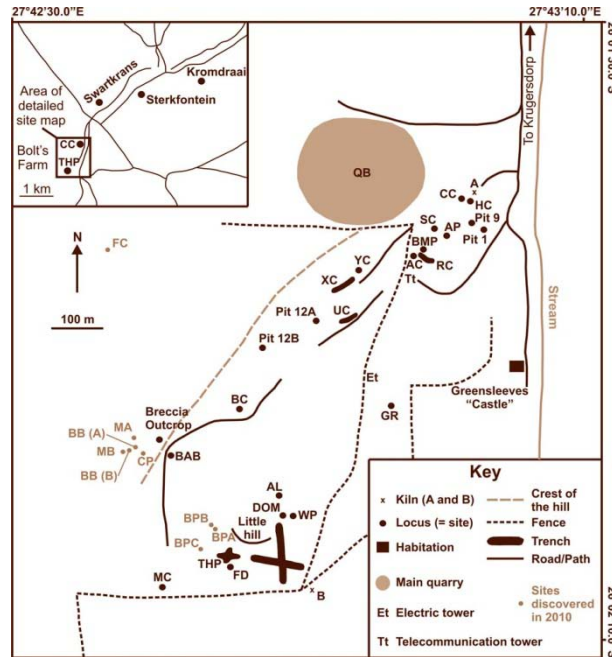


A view of the Ditsong Preparation Laboratory.

The Plio-Pleistocene section of the DNMNH, the HRU team and our American colleague, J. Adams decided to set up such a structure, the largest in Africa, not only to prepare the material from Bolt's Farm but also from other sites in the Cradle of Humankind. This new chemical preparation laboratory of DNMNH is the first of its kind and size in South Africa and is developed with all the safety and control equipment. This new laboratory has been funded by the French Embassy in Pretoria (South Africa), the CNRS in Paris (France) (LIA 1041 HOMEN and UPR 2147), through the NSF (USA) by J. Adams and also with support from the DNMNH. This new lab will be a pole of excellence in acid preparation for Africa. This facility has been named the **DITSONG Preparation Laboratory** and has been opened officially in November 2012 by the CEO of the DNMNH (Mr Makgolo Makgolo) and the Cultural and Scientific Counselor of the French Embassy (M. Guy de la Chevalerie).

GREENSLEEVES

We have regular meetings with J. Gaylord, the landowner of Greensleeves, to inform him about the fieldwork and research activities. Greensleeves presents 3 fossiliferous karstic spots: 1- Cobra Cave (CC)+ H Cave (HC), 2- Aves Cave karstic complex and 3- Garage Ravine Cave (GRC). With the authorization of J. Gaylord, the HRU focused the fieldwork activities only at the Aves Cave karstic complex. At the same time, we continued to prepare the breccias collected during the previous years at CC, HC and GRC in order to avoid the backlog.



Location of the different loci of Bolt's Farm.

During the prospection in 2001 (Sénégas et al., 2002), we tried to identify the fossiliferous pits discovered by the Camp's team (Cooke, 1991). The Greensleeves part of Bolt's Farm is the more complex and we had to modified the map during the prospection of 2008 (Thackeray et al., 2008). With our present knowledge of this area, the different pits seem to represent the different remnants of a unique karstic network. For this reason, we decided to adopt a new system a denomination with no reference to the name used by Camp. The new system will prevent the confusion between the old and the new collection. Aves Cave karstic complex is represented by:

- Aves Cave I with the collection prefix AC (= pit 14 of Camp (Bench Mark Pit) or pit 15)
- Aves Cave II with the collection prefix ACII (= east part of pit 8 (Rodent Cave))
- Aves Cave III with the collection prefix ACIII (could also represent pit 14 of Camp (Bench Mark Pit))
- Aves Cave IV with the collection prefix ACIV (entrance of pit 5 or was pit 5 (Smith Cave))
- Aves Cave V with the collection prefix ACV (pit 5 (Smith Cave) or pit 13).

Our goal is now to understand, with the help of a geologist, J. Hancox, how these different loci from the same karstic network correlate to each others.

FIELDWORK METHODOLOGY

At Bolt's Farm, we are developing a specific methodology to work the different loci. We are proceeding in four main steps: 1) work on the dumps, 2) cleaning of the site (grass and superficial sediment are removed), 3) excavation of the *ex-situ* and decalcified breccia and 4) excavation of the *in situ* breccia. Sometimes, several steps are carried out simultaneously according to the scientific needs. We work intensively during two seasons per year (april-may and october-november), 1 month to 1 and 1/2 month each. The sites are maintained regularly by the HRU members based at the DNMNH.

1. Work on the dumps.

In the past, mining activities took place at Bolt's farm like at many sites in the Cradle of Humankind. Fossiliferous block of breccia were extracted by miners and, useless for them, were thrown on the dumps. These dumps are very important because they yielded very interesting fossils, such as *Australopithecus sediba* at Malapa. They have to be worked with an appropriate methodology.

We moved, on the mine dumps, numerous blocks of breccia in order for them to be washed with the next rain shower. Indeed, in the dumps, the blocks are mixed with decalcified breccia or with sediment already present on the ground, sometimes covering the blocks. This little manipulation allows us to select the most interesting blocks. Between 2010 and 2013, 316 blocks of breccias were collected (Table.1). Each block has a catalogue number and the date of discovery; some more information is also reported in the catalogue such as the persons who collected the fossils or the breccias. Before the acid preparation, pictures are taken, the colour of the breccias is recorded according to a colour chart and all the information is kept in specific record-card.

Table 1. The blocks of breccias collected at Bolt's Farm-Greensleeves by the HRU team between 2010 to 2013.

	2010 Season 2	2011 Season 1	2011 Season 2	2012 Season 1	2012 Season 2	2013 Season 1
Aves Cave I (AC)	4	14	30	47	70	64
Aves Cave II (ACII) (Rodent Cave)	21	18	32	0	0	0
Aves Cave III (ACIII) (BMP)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Aves Cave IV (Smith—Cave entrance)	0	0	10	0	0	0
Aves Cave V (ACV) (Smith Cave)	0	0	0	6	0	0
TOTAL	25	32	72	53	70	64

On the field, when it is possible, we are separating systematically fossiliferous breccias from the other blocks (sterile breccias, dolomite, chert) in two different dumps as suggested by the SAHRA staff during the inspection of Bolt's Farm in 2011.

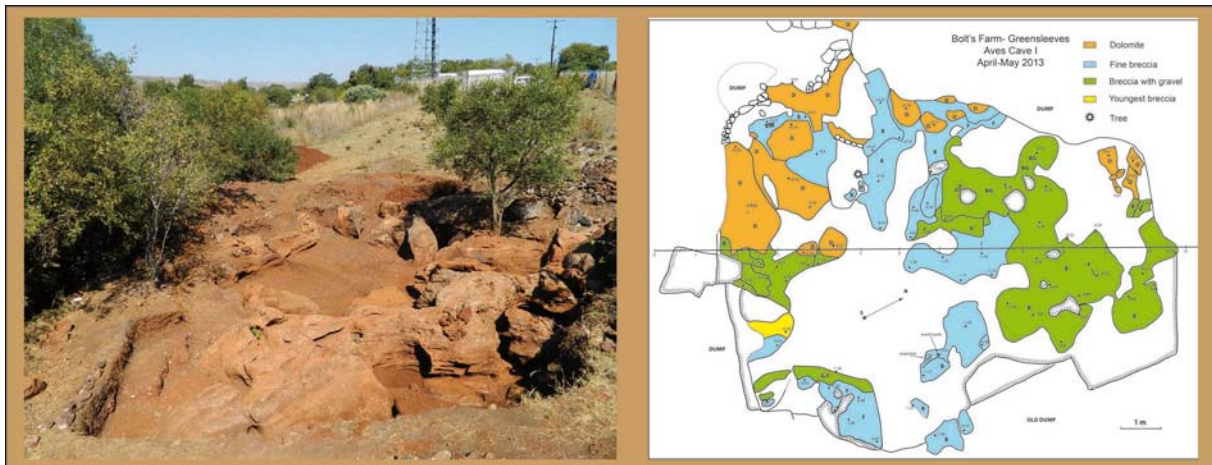
2. Cleaning of the site.

The loci were covered with grass and small bushes. This cover was removed in order to get access to the *in situ* breccia and the structure of the deposit. We are trying to preserve the flora as much as possible, specially the indigenous plant. Our team will maintain the sites regularly.

This step is very important now to understand the geology and the extension of the locus before we start to excavate the *in situ* level and to estimate the degree of disturbing caused by the mining activities. In November 2010, we started to clean systematically the most promising locus from Greensleeves, Aves Cave I (AC). Our geologist, J. Hancox, asked us to remove as much grass and superficial cover as possible to access the *in situ* breccia.

3. Excavation of the *ex-situ* and decalcified breccia.

This step started at AC in November 2011 and will continue for many years. It is important to remove the sediment and the decalcified breccia to expose the *in situ* breccia and dolomite for the future geological studies. The hardest part of the site is excavated with some small hand-pics and the softest (close to the breccia) or presenting some bones with some small steel or stainless forged combi trowel-spatula (<http://www.strati-concept.com/>). All these tools are used in Europe, in the USA and now in different country in Africa (Kenya, Namibia, Madagascar, Uganda,...) to excavate the palaeontological and archaeological sites.



Aves Cave I : left: view of the excavation in May 2013, right: map of the locus in May 2013.

The sediment and the decalcified breccia are sieved in order to retrieve the small fossil remains we were not able to see during the digging. We use two types of professional plastic frame sieves especially adapted for this type of fieldworks. All the sieves are 47.5 cm in diameter and 9 cm in depth. The stainless steel wire screen is reinforced at the bottom to support the weight of the sediment. Usually, we sieve with a 6.14 mm mesh (this mesh smaller than the one used generally in palaeontological sites in East Africa and most of the sites in the Cradle of Humankind) which allows us to retrieve the primate juvenile and small carnivores teeth. When it is richer in small remains, we sieve with a 3.93 mm mesh but the

finest sediment is saved in a bag to be sieved again at the DNMNH with a stainless Saulas sieve (mesh 0.4 mm).

Different information is associated with the fossiliferous material (date, name of excavator, location). These data are important for the archives. We map the *in situ* breccia and dolomite while the excavation progresses. We decided of a datum point from which all the measurements are taken (professional measure tape open frame (30 m) and a metallic measure tape for distances and optical theodolyte (Hilti POL 15) for depth).

4. Excavation of the *in situ* breccia.

This step did not really start yet; the excavation of the *ex-situ* and decalcified breccia must be more advanced. Some samples of *in situ* breccias have been taken anyway to test the potentialities or to preserve a particularly interesting or fragile specimen.

PREPARATION OF THE MATERIAL.

As mentioned previously, two main techniques are used to prepare the fossiliferous breccias: mechanical and acid preparation. The two methods are time consuming. The first one is commonly used to recover the large specimens but is almost useless to recover the microfauna which is essential for palaeoenvironment reconstruction and also for biochronology. The acid preparation, if well controlled, is the most appropriate technique to recover both the macrofauna and the microfauna from the blocks of breccia. We used the acid preparation systematically for the material coming from Bolt's Farm. It explains why the micromammal collection from Bolt's Farm is the best collection for the Cradle of Humankind.

The HRU team is trying to improve the method. The residue after acid preparation is sieved (mesh 0.4 mm, stainless Saulas sieve) in order to recover the smallest fossil specimens (rodent isolated teeth for example). We are also improving the record of any relevant information concerning the blocks of breccias before and during the preparation, e.g. the aspect of the breccia, the acid used, which percentage of acid, the consolidant... These information are very important for the preservation of the material but also for future researchers (history of fieldwork, isotopic analysis, ...).

CURATION

The aim of the project is not only to find new fossils and to study them but it concerns the whole process from the field to the collection. A great effort has been done for curation. A preliminary catalogue is realised for each macrofossil just after the fieldwork (if it comes from the decalcified breccia) or the next season once the fossil is prepared; thus the fossil has a collection number very quickly. A great part of our funding is dedicated to plastic boxes of international standard (Caubère) and good quality plastic grip bags (minigrip). All the information are entered in a data-base by the Plio-Pleistocene section of the DNMNH.

PRINCIPAL SCIENTIFIC RESULTS.

Since the new preparation laboratory is fully functional, the preparation of the fossiliferous blocks of breccias is much more efficient. We published the first results for Garage Ravine Cave (Badenhorst et al., 2011). F. Sénégas is currently studying the microfauna from the Rodent Corner of Cobra Cave and an article will be submitted soon in the Annals of the Ditsong National Museum History Museum. The preparation of the breccias from AC II

(previously Rodent Cave) yielded the first large mammals (big felid and bovid), but also microfauna.

For the past two years, we focused our efforts on Aves Cave I. One of the first blocks of breccia prepared yielded a juvenile tooth of a suid that M. Pickford recognized as *Potamochoeroides hypsodon* Dale 1948 (Pickford, 2013), previously described, by some authors, as *Metridiochoerus andrewsi* Stage 1 (Harris and White, 1979; White *et al.*, 2006) or (Cooke, 2005). This pig was found in the Member 3 at Makapansgat (dated between 3.04 and 2.58 myr (Cooke, 2005)), in the Member 3 of Kromdraai but also at MA (Bolt's Farm) (Gommery *et al.*, 2012). This pig is found also in the Usno formation in Ethiopia which is dated to 3.4 myr (White *et al.*, 2006). Thus, AC is the fourth oldest site at Bolt's Farm, a bit younger than Waypoint 160 (4.5 to 4 myr) and BPB but probably about the same age than MA. AC could be the same age than Member 2 of Sterkfontein, which yielded Little Foot. As for MA, AC exhibits a rich *in situ* fossiliferous breccia which is open air exposed.

AC yielded more suids remains in other blocks of breccia found in the dump but also from the decalcified breccia during the last two seasons (november 2012 and april 2013). The new material should confirm the identification and the dating of the site. Except for Gondolin, few sites in the Cradle yielded a lot of suids. AC can be compared to Makapansgat, by the species shared between the two sites but also by its richness. AC is the richest site in the Cradle for the postcranial remains (sometimes articulated) of pigs. For the moment, we did not find any equid but there are several taxa of bovid, few big carnivores (Hyeonidae and Felidae) and some primate teeth. The microfauna is very rich in this site. The preliminary study shows a very good representation of *Dasymys*, more abundant represented than in a lot of other sites from the Cradle. This seems to indicate that the water component was well represented in the past environment. An article should be submitted before the end of this year or for the beginning of next year.

We have been contacted by R. Bode and S. Reynolds for us to participate to a volume untitled "African Palaeoenvironments" at Cambridge University Press in which we will write a chapter about Bolt's Farm.

TRAINING.

Four interns that are funded by the National Research Foundation (NRF) are being trained in the method of fieldwork during the last 3 years.

Four students (3 from the Department of Anthropology and Archaeology of UNISA at Pretoria (Angelique Botes, Candice Rajoo & Wynand Van Zyl) and 1 from the Forensic and Archaeological Sciences of the University of Bradford in UK (Vuyelwa Abigail Bokuvha)) have participate to the excavation at AC.

EXHIBITION AND POPULARIZING.

We are very aware that the results of our research have to reach an as large audience as possible. So, in 2010, we set up an exhibition for the general public about Bolt's Farm DNMNH. This exhibition was officially opened the 24th of November 2010 by the CEO of the DNMNH (Mr Makgolo Makgolo) and the Cultural and Scientific Councilor of the French Embassy (M. Guy de la Chevalerie). The exhibition was on until the 18th November 2011 and was then moved to Maropeng (25th November 2011 to 29th February 2012, "Discover the kingdom of the Cat and take a personal look in to the illustrious life and career of Dr Robert Broom") to be part of a bigger exhibition for the 70th birthday of the death of Robert Broom .

With the financial help of the CNRS office in South Africa, we edited a booklet about the Bolt's Farm exhibition. Almost at the same time, we published an article about Bolt's Farm in the best popularizing journal in Archaeology in France (Archéologia).

The HRU team participate to the exhibition "A summary South African Prehistory, with reference to stone tool technology" in Toulouse (France) (November 2013 - March 2014) for the South African Season event in France organised by F. Thackeray with the support of the South African Ministry of Sciences and Technology for a presentation of Bolt's Farm.

FUNDING

The HRU team were funded through several sources during the last 6 years for the work at Bolt's Farm.

- PICS n°4356 CNRS-NRF «Hominids and plio-pleistocenes environments in the Cradle of Humankind (South Africa)» from 2008 to 2010: 70 000 Rands per year.
- LIA n°1041 HOMEN (Hominids and environments : evolution of the biodiversity during the Plio-Pleistocene (Cradle of Humankind, South Africa), from 2011 to 2014, 10 000 € per year.
- UPR 2147 of CNRS, every year around 3 500 €.
- French embassy in South Africa: 2010, 50 000 Rands ; 2011, 50 000 Rands and 2013, 100 000 Rands.
- Ditsong National Museum of Natural History: Car, petrol, water for preparation, acetic acid, Curation.

HRU Bibliography and activities concerning Bolt's Farm.

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