

**AMS Radiocarbon Dating and Isotopic Analysis of Charcoal & Coprolite
Materials from Equus Cave and Black Earth Cave, Taung World Heritage Site,
South Africa**

Our Ref: 10504



an agency of the
Department of Arts and Culture

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South African Heritage Resources Agency | 111 Harrington Street | Cape Town
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Letter

In terms of Section 32(19) of the National Heritage Resources Act (Act 25 of 1999)

Attention: Dr Brian F Kuhn
University of Johannesburg
Department of Geology
University of Johannesburg
Auckland Park 2006

On-going excavations at the Taung World Heritage site, Northwest Province has renewed research at Equus Cave (EQC) and Black Earth Cave (BEC). Research at these locations are critical for re-interpreting the chronology of Taung, beyond the well-known Australopithecus-bearing site. These lesser known sites preserve deposits potentially dating from the Pleistocene to the Holocene, which suggests the timing of Taung localities could stretch from the Pliocene to the Holocene. This would make the Taung World Heritage Sites preserves one of the longest chronological sequences in Southern Africa. However, there have been numerous challenges in developing a chronology for EQC and BEC. In 2012 and 2014, charcoal and coprolite materials were collected from these sites, which can be used for accelerated mass spectrometry (AMS) radiocarbon dating and extracting date from pollen samples. Prof. Andy I.R. Herries has received funding through the Australian Research Council (ARC) to conduct such testing on this material to help clarify the chronology of EQC and BEC. As such, it is requested that charcoal and coprolite samples from EQC and BEC be shipped to La Trobe University, Melbourne, Australia so advanced dating techniques can be carried out. The motivation to send these samples out of South Africa is that the majority of our funding to conduct post-excavation analyses on the EQC and BEC materials is funded through the ARC, and the facilities to conduct advanced dating on charcoal and pollen samples is available through LaTrobe University.

Dear Brian and Matt,

I wish you a Happy New Year filled with joy, happiness and good health!

I am currently reviewing your application about the export of charcoal and coprolite samples from Taung for dating and need a few more details around transport etc. Please be so kind to complete the attached

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document and upload it to your application on SAHRIS:

<http://www.sahra.org.za/sahris/cases/ams-radiocarbon-dating-and-isotopic-analysis-charcoal-coprolite-materials-equus-cave-and-black>

Should you have any further queries, please contact the designated official using the case number quoted above in the case header.

Yours faithfully

Ragna Redelstorff
Heritage Officer
South African Heritage Resources Agency

John Gribble
Manager: Maritime and Underwater Cultural Heritage Unit / Acting Manager: Archaeology, Palaeontology and Meteorites Unit
South African Heritage Resources Agency

ADMIN:

Direct URL to case: <http://www.sahra.org.za/node/383797>

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Terms & Conditions:

1. This approval does not exonerate the applicant from obtaining local authority approval or any other necessary approval for proposed work.
2. If any heritage resources, including graves or human remains, are encountered they must be reported to SAHRA immediately.
3. SAHRA reserves the right to request additional information as required.