

Taung Heritage Site- Report to SAHRA (2017-2018)

Permit #: 9/2/036/0003

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In May of 2015 Permit #: 9/2/036/0003 was issued for continued work at the Type Site, Equus Cave and Black Earth Cave, as well as the surrounding tufa and flowstones for dating and isotope studies. The past three year cycle proved to be a difficult time for research at Taung. The 2015 field season was cancelled due to the “fees must fall” unrest, and in 2016 a small contingent of scientists only visited the site for two days. There were no visits conducted in 2017 due to financial constraints as well as a number of core scientists delving into other projects not related to Taung.

On a positive note 2017 did see the completion of an honours project in the Department of Geology at the University of Johannesburg. This project mapped the core drilled next to the Dart Pinnacle. 2018 should see a Masters project continue the work on the cores. In addition we are continuing to work on hundreds of fossils that were left behind after the 1994 season ended. We are also continuing our examinations on the fauna recovered from both Black Earth Cave (2014) and Equus Cave (2012 and 2014) as well as numerous archaeological remains recovered from Equus Cave.

To date there have been five articles published as a direct or indirect result of renewed research at the Taung World Heritage site in 2010. These are listed below.

Parker, J.F., Hopley, P.J., Kuhn, B.F. (2016) Fossil Carder Bees' nest from the hominin locality of Taung, South Africa. *PLoS ONE* 11(9): e0161198.
doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0161198

Kuhn, B.F., Herries, A.I.R., Caruana, M.V., Hopley, P., Pickering, R., Price, G., Baker, S.E., Menter, C. (2016) Renewed investigations at Taung; 90 years after *Australopithecus africanus*. *Palaeontologia Africana* 51: 10-26

Doran, T.L., Herries, A.I.R., Hopley, P., Hellstrom, J., Hodge, E. Kuhn, B.F. (2015) Assessing the palaeoenvironmental potential of Pliocene to Holocene tufa deposits along the Ghaap Plateau Escarpment (South Africa) using stable isotopes. *Quaternary Science Reviews* 84: 133-143

Kuhn, B.F., Carlson, K.J., Hopley, P., Zipfel, B., Berger, L.R. (2015) Identification of fossil eggshells from the Taung hominin locality, Taung, Northwest Province, South Africa. *Palaeontologia Electronica* 18.1.11A: 1-16
palaeo-electronica.org/content/2015/1026-identification-of-fossil-eggs

Hopley, P.J., Herries, A.I.R., Baker, S.E., Kuhn, B.F., Menter, C.G. (2013) Beyond the South African cave paradigm- *Australopithecus africanus* from Plio-Pleistocene paleosol deposits at Taung. *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* 151:316-324.