

NOVEMBER 2007

PRESIDENTS'S REPORT

I am both privileged and delighted to be able to offer a few words of introduction to this information-filled newsletter so assiduously compiled by Philippa Huntsman-Mapila. 2007, being both an INQUA and SASQUA Congress year has been full of activities for those of us with a personal interest in the complex and fascinating events and processes of the last two million years or so (when *will* that stratigraphic commission give us a break? – just kidding Tim!).

The SASQUA meeting was everything I have come to know and love about the Quaternary community of southern Africa (and beyond) over the years – a combination of challenging science, penetrating discussion, fieldwork fun and games and, of course, a fair quantity of the sub-continent's finest beers and wines! The Howick meeting was superbly organized by Greg and the team (although he seemed convinced most of the time that it *wasn't!*) and it was especially interesting for me to visit a part of the country that I had previously not been to. The field excursion, with at least one unanticipated (and hilarious) mishap was classic Rodney Maud – all sound science and deep knowledge in a cocktail of outrageous tongue in cheek humour. Thanks to all of you for a great and productive time, Peter Holmes and I have a lot to live up to in Kynsna in 2009.

I was unable to attend the INQUA Congress at Cairns for the first time in many years – but Greg Botha's report here will give you a flavour of the proceedings. Highspots must certainly have been the award of one of the poster prizes to Rebekah Singh and the re-election of Margaret Avery to the Vice-Presidency. Congratulations to both of you. The Quaternary community in our region is a small but highly productive one and the importance of the time period (can I call it

such?) is not lost on the international community. I look forward to our coaxing more student members into the fold over the next few years and certainly greeting as many of you as possible at our next biennial meeting. Membership issues aside, I am certainly also anticipating good interactions with the rest of our highly skilled and experienced committee! I wish to thank in particular the outgoing President, Stefan Grab, who pushed and pulled us along where necessary in a highly effective way.

Mike Meadows
University of Cape Town

Newsletter Editor: Philippa Huntsman-Mapila, University of Botswana

Report on the XVII SASQUA Congress and NRF sponsored keynote speaker, Dr R. Fitzpatrick

Prepared by Greg Botha

The XVII biennial congress of the Southern African Society for Quaternary Research (SASQUA) was held at the Umgeni Valley Nature Reserve outside Howick, KwaZulu-Natal from 10 to 13 April 2007. The event received generous sponsorship from the National Research Foundation (NRF), Council for Geoscience, Umgeni Water and GIMS.

The congress theme, "Understanding environmental change: The contribution of Quaternary hindsight to future sustainability", highlighted the contribution of Quaternary records towards predicting the extent and impacts of future global climate change.

A total of 50 delegates attended and presented 41 papers and posters, representing the collaboration of 116 authors from 13 different countries and 34 different institutions. About 60% of all contributing authors were based in South Africa, with 11% from the United Kingdom, and about 9% from Australia. The significant international presence from the United Kingdom, Australia, Germany, Sweden, Spain, France, Nigeria, the United States of America, Canada, Taiwan and Russia, highlights the strongly collaborative and interdisciplinary nature of Quaternary research in southern Africa.

The University of Cape Town was the largest group represented (24 contributing authors) while presentations by the CGS and University of the Witwatersrand each represented 11 authors. As for most Quaternary research articles, many of the presentations were interdisciplinary and multi-institutional, indicating Quaternary geoscience investigation is a thriving research field.

Catering for the congress was provided by the staff of the Wildlife and Environment Society of South Africa (WESSA) at Umgeni Valley Nature Reserve. Delegates were sustained by teas with freshly baked treats, and freshly prepared hot lunches. A spit braai supper and the congress dinner at Yellowwood Café in Howick were enjoyed by all.

The mid-congress field excursion to Sibudu Shelter was led by Lyn Wadley. Prior to departure, her research team presented findings on the archaeological and palaeontological records from the site. The group traveled in a hired coach accompanied (fortunately!) by several 4WD vehicles. Getting such a large group across the river and up into the shelter without injury was quite a feat. The photograph shows the SASQUA group at the site (see photo). In his efforts to take the group as close to the shelter as possible the coach driver strayed off the sand road onto the margin of ploughed lands where the coach sank into soft soil. It required considerable towing from Tim Partridge's Land Rover and lots of pushing to get the coach back onto firm ground.

Keynote address and public lecture

The keynote speaker was Dr Rob Fitzpatrick from CSIRO Land and Water in South Australia. A grant from the NRF to SASQUA covered half of the airfare and accommodation costs associated with his attendance of the meeting. Dr Fitzpatrick's keynote address described advances made in soil-regolith models and how these are being applied to manage environmental issues surrounding problem acid sulfate soils and in mineral exploration. Rob's public lecture covered the use of soils and Quaternary sediments in crime investigations, including murders and rapid-response anti-terrorism activities, and caught the attention of all present. The lecture was attended by members of the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) who were very enthusiastic about Dr Fitzpatrick's research. The NPA requested that he deliver the same talk to their staff in Pretoria when he visited the ARC-ISCW after the congress. It became apparent that the judicial system in South Africa is struggling with a shortage of scientific specialists who can assist the police and NPA to prosecute criminals on the basis of forensic investigations.

Field excursion with Rob Fitzpatrick

The Council for Geoscience sponsored a visit by Dr Fitzpatrick, accompanied by SASQUA President Prof S. Grab and Treasurer, Dr Greg Botha to the Sani Top and Thaba Ntlenyana areas of Lesotho. Rob had asked

to return to Sani Pass as many decades had passed since he last visited the area. En route we visited late Pleistocene colluvial mantles that buried parts of the floodplain of the Mkhomazi River near Bulwer. This sedimentation process suggests that the river flow waned dramatically during the period of fluctuating temperatures and environmental desiccation preceding the Last Glacial Maximum. The group visited enigmatic block streams and sediment aprons on the slopes of the highest mountain in this region. These deposits have been described as representing periglacial conditions in the region at the LGM. Dr Fitzpatrick was very enthusiastic about the Mn mineralization and ferruginous minerals that indicate groundwater movement in these wetland deposits. At the eroded peatland site south of Sani Top he indicated a range of poorly crystalline ferruginous minerals associated with these degraded wetland deposits.

Dr Fitzpatrick was enthusiastic about the Quaternary research community in South Africa and was most encouraged by the range of presentations and quality of research demonstrated at the SASQUA meeting. The XVII SASQUA Congress organizing committee and the SASQUA Council are grateful that the NRF was able to facilitate the return of this eminent scientist and long-time SASQUA member to his scientific roots in KwaZulu-Natal.

Student prizes

The oral and poster presentations by post-graduate students were of a high standard. Prizes were awarded to;

Best student oral presentation: Charl Bosman for the paper, *C Bosman and R Uken; Sea-level fluctuations and submerged coastal dune systems: rapid Quaternary environmental change as documented by the Aliwal Shoal*

Best student poster presentation: Caroline Duncan for the poster, *C.E. Duncan et al, Holocene environmental change and the vegetation community dynamics of the Knysna forest: pollen and charcoal analysis of sediments from Groenvlei, southern Cape, South Africa*.

SASQUA school learner workshop

A scholar workshop was arranged for 10 April 2007, the day before the congress, to expose senior Geography and Science learners and their teachers from secondary schools in the Howick-Pietermaritzburg area to the broad field of Quaternary research. The event was arranged by Greg Botha and Rebekah Singh and sponsorship was received from the Council for Geoscience, GIMS and Umgeni Water.

GIMS provided badges, caps and mouse pads promoting international GIS Day. Each learner and school received copies of the illustrated dictionary of geographic information systems, "A to Z GIS".

A series of short lectures by SASQUA researchers demonstrated how the common thread of orbitally-forced cyclicity can be recognized in long-term records from glacial ice, deep marine deposits, desert sands and other terrestrial environments. Presentations on palynology and dating techniques provided insight into the diverse analytical skills required to interpret Quaternary palaeoenvironmental change. Adaptations by humans during this period of changing climate was stressed in archaeological presentations. The massive impact on global change by man relative to these natural fluctuations was highlighted.

The presentations included;

Greg Botha: Geological timescale and the Quaternary

Greg Botha: Orbital Forcing; how the Earth's orbit around the Sun influences life

Greg Botha & Amanda Rau (with input from Charl Bosman): Quaternary marine science

Greg Botha: Glacial and interglacial cycles of the Quaternary; rapid climate changes of the Last Glacial Cycle

Stefan Grab & Greg Botha: Glacial & Periglacial Records

Greg Botha: Terrestrial records of palaeoenvironmental change

Trevor Hill: Introduction to Pollen Analysis

Chrissie Sievers: The Stone Age Rocks!

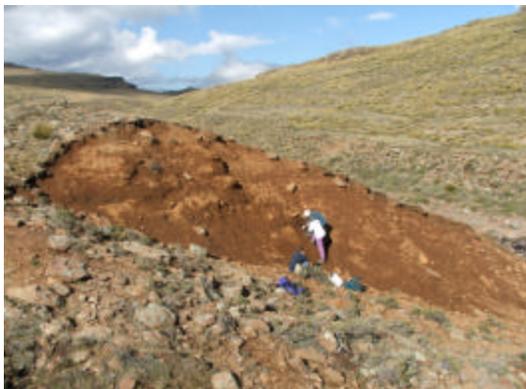
Bronwen van Doornum: The rise and fall of Mapungubwe

Zenobia Jacobs: Quaternary Dating Methods – an overview

Rodney Maud: The impact of Quaternary matters on our daily life including food supply and engineering infrastructure.

James Brink: Quaternary vertebrate palaeontology - a short introduction

The new South African high school Geography curriculum includes an introduction to GPS and GIS. For the workshop, a series of routes were created and pegs placed at waypoints located in dense grassland or bush. Each group navigated along the route by locating waypoints through azimuth/distance directions or by following the GPS tracks (see photo). To illustrate digital map making the groups were introduced to the process of constructing a 3D-map using GPS data collected on their GPS “treasure hunt” in the reserve and compiled during a live GIS demonstration by Rebekah Singh of Council for Geoscience.



Dr Rob Fitzpatrick and Prof Stefan Grab from Univ Witwatersrand discuss apparent Mn mineralization in hillslope deposits on the southern slopes of Thaba Ntlenyana, Lesotho. (photo Dr G A Botha)



Dr Rob Fitzpatrick, his wife and Prof Stefan Grab, inspect colluvial hillslope cover which buried a floodplain alongside the Mkhomazi River. (photo Dr G A Botha)



The SASQUA congress group in Sibudu Shelter during the mid-congress field excursion.



The delegates trying to move the coach from a ploughed land where it sank in soft soil while attempting to drop the group close to the Sibudu Shelter.



Learners attending the SASQUA workshop display the pegs which they located by navigating along a set route in the Umgeni Valley Nature Reserve using a GPS. (photo Greg Botha)

BGM minutes – find at end of newsletter

Report on the XVII congress of the International Union for Quaternary Research (INQUA)

**28 July to 3 August 2007
Cairns, Australia**

Prepared by Greg Botha

The XVII INQUA Congress was hosted by the Australasian Quaternary Association (AQUA) and sponsored by the Australian National University, Elsevier Press, Geoscience Australia and ANSTO. A commercial congress organising company, ICMS Pty Ltd, provided the logistical support for the congress. The meeting ran from Saturday 28 July to Friday 3 August at the Cairns Convention Centre, North Queensland, Australia.

The congress attracted well over 1400 abstracts and presentations were organized into 73 thematic symposia. Oral presentations were run in nine concurrent sessions. During the eight plenary sessions, one hour keynote papers were presented by invited speakers. Abstracts have been published in a special issue of *Quaternary International* (volume 167-168, pp 3-486) Posters were presented in five daily sessions and posters were left on display

for several days. Four mid-congress field excursions guided participants to different aspects of the Quaternary evolution of the region on Tuesday 31 July 2007. Business meetings of the five INQUA Commissions and other sub-commissions or working groups were held after hours from 18h00 to 20h00. The SA-INQUA representatives and other South African delegates attended some commission and working group meetings where they have served as country representatives or full members.

Greg Botha attended as the representative of the South African national committee for INQUA. Rebekah Singh was sponsored as the "Capacity-building delegate" supporting the SA INQUA committee in the capacity of an observer at the INQUA International Council meetings held over three afternoon sessions on 30 July, and 1&2 August at the Cairns International Hotel.

The meetings were attended by representatives and observers from 33 countries holding different membership status within INQUA. The formation of an East African Quaternary Association (EAQUA) was supported by INQUA Executive Committee, Vice President Margaret Avery who stimulated the drive to constitute this organisation formally. The EAQUA constitution draws on that of SASQUA. EAQUA was formally proposed as a new Associate Member.

The Presidential address by Prof John Clague highlighted the building of a strong Quaternary presence in Africa as a priority. During the inter-congress period INQUA attained full member status of ICSU. Clague explained how working groups from INQUA had successfully lobbied the ICS Sub-commission on Quaternary Stratigraphy to drop their proposal to cease formal use of the "Quaternary" and secured the status of the Quaternary as a "System" in the 2007 version of the Geological Timescale. The executive council established the "Sir Nicholas Shackleton Medal" for outstanding young Quaternary scientists, which was awarded to Chris Turney. The journal *Quaternary International* has developed well under the control of publisher Elsevier and now boasts an Impact Factor of 1.607 (2006). The President committed INQUA to more active networking and collaboration with ICSU, IGG,

PAGES and other organisations with overlapping mandates and spheres of interest regarding environmental change and hazard risk. The theme "Science for Society" should be regarded as a goal.

INQUA membership is based on member countries not individual membership and the need to be more active during inter-congress periods was stressed. Associate membership is free of charge and there was a call to identify and recruit potential additional members particularly in the area where the ICSU Regional Office for Africa is active and in the Caribbean region. There was a proposal from Prof John Lowe of the UK (now a Vice President) that additional sponsorship be sought for African countries.

The election of the 2007-2011 Executive Committee included the positions of President, Secretary General, Treasurer, and four Vice-Presidents. Seven nominations were received for the VP positions and two for the position of President, who were given an opportunity to outline their vision for INQUA in a short presentation preceding the vote.

The Executive Committee elected includes:

President: Allan Chivas -Australia
Secretary-General: Pete Coxon - UK
Treasurer: Marie-France Loutre – Belgium
Vice-President: Margaret Avery - South Africa
VP: Allan Ashworth - USA
VP Koji Okumura - Japan
VP John Lowe - UK

The re-election of Margaret Avery was recognition by the international community for her excellent service in organising new INQUA members from within Africa and her effective oversight and communication with the Commission on Palaeoecology and Human Evolution (PAHE).

Prof Allan Chivas, the incoming INQUA President, undertook to consult with other organisations associated with studying environmental change and hazards. He will consult with the IUGS at the IGC in Oslo in 2008. He highlighted the need to attract new members from SE Asia and to address the membership of Turkey and the EAQUA countries. The existing commissions will continue to develop with a focus on longer-

term multidisciplinary projects for the next four years whereafter they can be changed. He placed importance on the negotiation of a new publishing contract for Quaternary International with Elsevier.

INQUA must support the IPY and ICSU ROA thrust regarding "Natural and Human Induced Hazards in sub-Saharan Africa". INQUA would have to be more pro-active in defining initiatives based on a "State of the Earth" approach.

Commission reports

The reports by the five INQUA Commissions were based on the published reports already circulated in Quaternary Perspectives, Vol. 17, No. 1, 2007. Each commission liaises with the INQUA Executive Committee through a Vice-President allocated responsibility for monitoring the activities of that commission's activities.

- i) Commission on Coastal and Marine Processes (CMP)
Led by Cecile Baeteman (Geological Survey Belgium) and Secretary Callum Firth. Will continue to be subdivided into three sub-commissions: Coastal (Cecile Baeteman), Continental shelf (Y. Yokohama, Japan), Deep sea/marine (I. Cacho, Spain).
- ii) Commission on Palaeoclimate (PALCOMM)
President-elect Sandy Harrison (UK); Vice-President, Peter Kershaw (Australia), Secretary; Jamie Schulmeister (NZ). Aims to expand membership to more corresponding members and will focus on the following areas; (a) Long-term palaeoclimate modelling and dating; (b) Palaeoceanographic studies; (c) Palaeoclimate datasets.
- iii) Commission on Palaeoecology and Human Evolution (PAHE)
President, Gary Haines (USA) and VP Nicky Whitehouse.
- iv) Commission on Stratigraphy and Chronology (SACCOM)

President Brad Pillans and Secretary Zhou Liping will lead the commission.

- v) Commission on Terrestrial Processes, Deposits and History (TERPRO)
This multidisciplinary commission will focus on:
- (a) Hydrological change and climate (Gerardo Benito, Spain),
 - (b) Aeolian history of deserts and arid regions (Nick Lancaster, USA),
 - (c) Glaciation control on hydrology (Jasper Knight),
 - (d) Rapid changes since last glacial–interglacial transition, chronology (Jim Teller),
 - (e) Hazards and humans (Suzanne Leroy),
 - (f) Paleoseismicity, measurement and records (A. Machetti),
 - (g) Permafrost/polar regions,
 - (h) Interaction with PAGES.

INQUA 2011

The venue for the XVIII INQUA Congress in 2011 was contested by the cities of Edinburgh, Scotland and Bern, Switzerland. In a very closely contested ballot the XVIII INQUA Congress in 2011 was awarded to Bern, Switzerland. The bid by Prof Christian Schluchter highlighted the benefits of hosting the meeting in the Alps. The meeting will be hosted at the university in the 2nd–3rd week of August 2011 and the committee undertook to keep the registration price to about €500, including the conference dinner.

Geological status of the Quaternary

The Quaternary will be retained as a System although the lower boundary of the Pleistocene will remain at 1.8My despite the INQUA preference for the lowering of the Pleistocene boundary to the base of the Gelasian stage (2.6My). This will effectively place the base of the Quaternary in the Neogene. This has been opposed by the ICS Neogene Commission. The International Council voted unanimously to extend the Quaternary/Pleistocene boundary to the Gelasian. The IUGS supports the INQUA position on the status of the Quaternary. This matter would be taken further when the “Geo-

unions” affiliated to ICSU had a chance to meet.

Prize for Rebekah Singh

SA-INQUA “Capacity building delegate” Rebekah Singh was awarded one of the ten “Best student poster” prizes for her poster on “Landslide susceptibility modelling in KwaZulu-Natal”. Her prize is a €150 book prize from Elsevier.



Rebekah Singh with her poster

RESEARCH NEWS AND UPDATES

Margaret Avery Iziko South African Museum

Update on EAQUA

I am glad to report that the Eastern African Quaternary Association (EAQUA) was formed at a most useful and enjoyable two-day workshop in Kampala in June this year. Julius Lejju, who organised the meeting, was elected as Chairman of the Interim Committee, which will see that the constitution is made ready for acceptance and that there are enough members signed up to allow elections for a formal Committee to be elected at the next meeting in Addis Ababa. EAQUA was accepted as an Associate Member of INQUA at the recent INQUA Congress in Cairns, which was a proud moment for all of us. Ngalla Jillani and Fredrick Manthi, another

EAQUA Committee member, represented EAQUA at the International Council meetings once EAQUA had been elected.

Ngalla Jillani, known to one and all simply as Jillani, a member of the EAQUA Committee, is now enrolled at Wits for a PhD in the Anatomy Dept and so could perhaps be approached to act as liaison between EAQUA and SASQUA.

INQUA vice-president

I have been elected for a second term as a Vice President of INQUA at the Cairns Congress and my personal goal for the next four-years period is to try and help the West Africans to get a WAQUA up and running. I have a few names with which to begin but would be very grateful for any more contacts that people may have.

Research

As far as research goes, I am writing up micromammal material from the Sterkfontein Name Chamber and acknowledge Kathy Kuman's patience in waiting for me to get to it! I shall also be helping Robert Asher of the University of Cambridge examine golden moles from Langebaanweg. Finished work includes:

Avery, DM 2007. Micromammals as palaeoenvironmental indicators of the southern African Quaternary. *Transactions of the Royal Society of South Africa* **62**: 1723

Marion Bamford University of the Witwatersrand

This has been another busy year with field work. In February and March Prof Charles Peters and I made two trips to Seekoeivlei Nature Reserve (eastern Free State) to continue our study of modern wetlands as an analogue for the Olduvai Gorge palaeo-wetland. In April I went with Gabi Teren, a PhD student, co-supervised by Prof Norman Owen-Smith and me, to Howick for the SASQUA conference. We both enjoyed the presentations and social interactions.

In mid June I took another PhD student, Lucy Pereira, with me to Kenya where we joined the Koobi Fora Field School run by Rutgers University and the National Museums of Kenya. The school caters mostly for North American students but always includes a few students from East Africa. This time we had three South African students too. I teach the plant palaeoecology section of the course. Lucy collected fossil sediments for phytolith extraction from an Okote Member (1.6-1.4 Ma) site at Ileret on the northeastern shore of Lake Turkana for her PhD project. We also collected lots of modern plant material to make a phytolith reference collection. I collected another 200 pieces of fossil wood. This is a remote part of Kenya and to carry out such a field trip where over 70 people (students, academic and support staff) are self sufficient and mobile for six weeks is only possible with the logistical resources and experience of Jack Harris, David Braun, Purity Kiura and Emma Mbuu. In spite of the hardships it is a wonderful experience.

In July-August I went to Olduvai Gorge to join the OLAPP team of Rob Blumenshine, Fidelis Masao, Jackson Njau, Ian Stanistreet, Harald Stollhofen and Rosa Albert. This season we concentrated on excavations in FLKN Bed I to get a palaeoenvironmental context for the hominid tooth that Fidelis Masao found last season. Ron Clarke recognised the tooth as the missing molar in OH7, the type specimen of *Homo habilis*. We found several plant layers which will soon be described.

Magali Barré Université du Québec à Montréal

My PhD research is on the development of the IRSL and OSL dating method applied to archaeological and geological sites in southern Africa. The period of interest is the Middle Stone Age, and more precisely the Howieson's Poort. The studied archaeological sites, located in South Africa and Lesotho, are characterized by the presence of this industry. On the other hand, geological sites of interest are concentrated along the Durban coast, and dating will be focused on the Pleistocene coastal dunes.

My research is part of a collaboration between the Montreal dating laboratory, directed by Michel Lamothe, and the Australian dating group, with Richard G. Roberts and Zenobia Jacobs. Within the context of this collaboration, I went to Lesotho last August and participated in an archaeological sampling fieldtrip.

At the SASQUA XVII Biennial Congress, I presented a talk about the interests and the advantages of using feldspars to date archaeological sites. My communication was based on results obtained for samples from Die Kielders (South Africa), for which we have quartz and feldspar ages. I have shown that quartz OSL and feldspar IRSL are two methods which complement each other, provided the latter is corrected for anomalous fading. Moreover, feldspars have the potential to date events that are 5 to 10 times older than the maximum age limit for quartz, which means that they are likely to be the most useful dating tool for the chronology of Human evolution and climatic change.

The next step in this research project will be to sample in the Durban coastal area. The study of these Pleistocene sequences along the southeastern coast of South Africa should contribute to define more precisely the chronostratigraphy of these sediments.

**Greg Botha
Council for Geoscience
SA national committee for IYPE**

International Year for the planet earth

The United Nations General Assembly has proclaimed the year 2008 to be the United Nations International Year of Planet Earth (IYPE). The Year's activities will span the three years 2007-2009. It will be the biggest ever international effort to promote the Earth sciences. The International Union for Quaternary Research (INQUA) is a Founding Partner. The Year's Project Leader, former International Union of Geological Sciences (IUGS) President Professor Eduardo F J de Mulder is well known to the Quaternary community having served INQUA for many years. The outreach programme has

established a comprehensive web site at <http://www.esfs.org/index.htm>.

The IUGS launched IYPE at the 32nd International Geological Congress (IGC) in Florence, Italy where a declaration noted that the geosciences can contribute significantly to a safer, healthier and wealthier world. The theme "Earth Science for Society" will highlight the value of this knowledge during a coordinated global outreach programme. Governments will be urged to pay greater attention to the Earth Sciences as the potential contribution of this field is seriously under-recognized by society. The focus will be on educational systems, governmental legislation and civil regulations so as to take full advantage of this extensive source of expertise and experience.

The Year aims to raise \$20 million from industry and governments and will spend half on co-funding research, and half on outreach activities. Sponsorship funds are coming in for the support of a broad range of activities linked to, or based upon the geosciences and their applications.

The NRF and SA-ICSU secretariat have formed the national committee to implement South Africa's contribution to the IYPE outreach programme. Greg Botha and John Compton are on the committee and will ensure that the Quaternary community is represented in all aspects of the programme. An initial project will aim at increasing awareness of the Earth Science amongst school learners. The outreach publication will utilize the IYPE themes described in the website. Comprehensive publications describing the scope of the eight themes can be downloaded from <http://www.esfs.org/downloads.htm>

The Year's research themes are;

Groundwater: *towards sustainable use;*

Hazards: *minimizing risk, maximizing awareness;*

Earth and Health: *building a safer environment;*

Climate change: *the 'stone tape';*

Resource issue s: *towards sustainable use;*

Megacities: *going deeper, building safer;*

Deep Earth: *from crust to core;*

Ocean: *abyss of time;*

Soil: *Earth's living skin;*

Earth and Life: *the origins of diversity.*

In addition, **Planet Earth in our Hands**, states the rationale for the Year, and **Outreach: bringing Earth sciences to everyone**, describes how the Outreach programme will work.

The SA national committee will appreciate any ideas that can contribute to enhancing awareness of Quaternary earth science in the context of the project.

John Compton University of Cape Town

Update of developments with the UCT group

There is a possibility of an upcoming IODP (International Ocean Drilling Program) leg off the margin of southern Africa, taking cores off the Zambezi, Limpopo, Tugela and on the Agulhas Plateau with the aim of reconstructing paleoceanography back to the Pliocene. Please contact me if you are interested in this ocean drilling leg.

Students:

Livhuwani Maake is now at Goldfields working for her bursary support. Her Honours project, finished in 2006, formed the basis of a paper on the source of suspended sediment in the upper Orange River which will be published soon:

Compton, J.S. and Maake, L. 2007. Source of the suspended load of the upper Orange River, South Africa. *South African Journal of Geology* 110.

James Wiltshire is busy finishing up his MSc thesis for final submission and should graduate in December this year. The title of

his thesis is: "Late Quaternary sedimentation on the continental slope off Cape Columbine: Variations in off shelf transport related to glacial driven sea level fluctuations."

Caren Herbert is writing up her PhD thesis on the sedimentology and geochemistry of the mudbelt (Holocene) on the western margin shelf. She wrote a paper that will appear this year on the geochronology of the mudbelt sediments:

Herbert, C. and Compton, J.S. 2007. Geochronology of Holocene sediments on the western margin of South Africa. *South African Journal of Geology* 110.

Rochelle Wigley is now part of the Council for Geoscience in Bellville but away for the next year in the States doing a bathymetry course in New Hampshire (USA).

Giuliana Franceschini is in Trieste, Italy at the University of Trieste working largely on geohydrology projects.

Stefan Grab University of the Witwatersrand

Oliver Davies Medal

In March 2007 the Oliver Davies Medal for the best published (in a peer reviewed journal) student paper, was awarded to Stephanie Mills. The paper stems from her PhD research in the School of Geography, Archaeology and Environmental Studies at the University of the Witwatersrand. Stephanie graduated in April 2007 and her thesis was entitled "The origin of slope deposits in the southern Drakensberg, Eastern Lesotho." The paper for which she was awarded the medal is:

Mills, S., and Grab, S., 2005. Debris ridges along the southern Drakensberg escarpment as evidence for Quaternary glaciation in southern Africa. *Quaternary International* 129, 61-73.

Philippa Huntsman-Mapila
University of Botswana

I successfully defended my PhD thesis in December 2006 at the Université de Bretagne Occidentale in Brest, France. The thesis, "Bassins de rift à des stades précoces de leur développement: l'exemple du Bassin Makgadikgadi-Okavango-Zambezi, Botswana et du Bassin Sud-Tanganyika (Tanzanie et Zambie). Composition géochimiques des sédiments: traçeurs des changements climatiques et tectoniques", consists of 6 journal articles (4 published and 2 submitted). The submitted articles are:

Huntsman-Mapila, P., Tiercelin, J.-J., Benoit, M., Talbot, M.R., Hémond, C., Bassoullet, C., Hureau-Mazaudier, D., Cotten J., Late Quaternary climate variability in the Southern Lake Tanganyika Basin, Tropical Eastern Africa, from geochemical data. Submitted to *Palaeogeography, Palaeoecology, Palaeoclimatology*

Huntsman-Mapila, P., Tiercelin, J.-J., Benoit, M., Ringrose, S., Cotton, J., Hémond, C., Sediment geochemistry, provenance and tectonic setting: Application of discrimination diagrams to early stages of intracontinental rift evolution, with examples from the Okavango and Southern Tanganyika rift basins. Submitted to *Journal of African Earth Sciences*.

The published articles are listed in the publications section of this newsletter.

With the PhD done, I now have a little more time to work on my other projects which include investigating the distribution and source of elevated arsenic in groundwater in the Okavango Basin. Of course I continue with the palaeo-environmental work with my colleague Susan Ringrose and others which gives me a good excuse to get out into the field on a regular basis. My last field trip included a visit to Gcwihaba Caves (formerly Drotskys Caves), a magnificent site where I hope to do more work in the future.

I am very pleased to be more involved in SASQUA, starting with the editing of this newsletter!

Colin Lewis
Rhodes University

Colin Lewis spent two months on the island of St Helena earlier this year collecting marine shells, snail shells and bird bones as part of his continuing project on climatic change on that island. He also lectured on climate change on the island to members of the St Helena National Trust. This lecture was subsequently broadcast on St Helena Radio. Samples collected during his visit have been radiocarbon dated at the Chrono Centre at Queen's University, Belfast. Other samples have gone to the (British) Natural History Museum.

Colin also has an entry, *Late Pleistocene and early Holocene foragers in Southern Africa* at proof stage in Elsevier's forthcoming *Encyclopedia of Archaeology*. He is presently completing a review paper on climate changes and associated human responses during the past 40 000 years in the Eastern and adjacent Western Cape. His work on the Brecon Beacons, in Wales, dating as far back as the 1960s, has recently been reviewed in Carr, S J, Coleman, C G, Humpage, A J and Shakesby, R A 2007 *Quaternary of the Brecon Beacons: Field Guide*, published by the Quaternary Research Association, London.

Mike Meadows
University of Cape Town

2006 was a landmark year for me as it represented my first opportunity to take sabbatical leave since 1992! The time went all too quickly, but I was at least able to spend some time in the field, my first extended field experience in many years. Dr Brian Chase, a postdoctoral fellow at Oxford University, and I explored significant parts of northern and western Namibia courtesy of a Leverhulme award (PI is Professor Dave Thomas at Oxford). The object of the exercise was to identify and recover herbivore middens, specifically those constructed (in some cases over tens of thousands of years) by the dassie and dassie rat. These colonial animals go about their business (literally and figuratively!) in a way that results in the accumulation of various plant fossils in the middens, effectively latrines, which may be preserved under a

particular range of environmental conditions. The real Quaternary palaeoecological opportunity is provided by the fact that the middens preserve in arid and semi-arid environments where the more typical pollen archives, such as wetlands, are absent. Brian and I, thanks especially to his climbing skills, strength and determination, were successful in bringing almost a metric tonne of the stuff back to Cape Town for analysis! Of course, this is more than a three-year postdoc can handle, so any of you out there have an interest in palynology (and a strong constitution!) looking for MSc or PhD projects – look no further.

In regard to students, Caroline Duncan and Mamo Seliane graduated last year with their MSc degrees and are now gainfully employed at QUADRU and the Kimberley Museum respectively – both in 'Quaternary'-related positions I might add. Bob Nakileza (a former student of Peter Holmes) graduated with his PhD in soil erosion research in Uganda. Current students include Catherine Gray (PhD) and Arabel Shaw, MSc (both of whom have submitted) and Lynne Quick and Kelly Kirsten-Sardinha (currently at the University of Bergen, Norway).

Other than this I have been busy teaching, writing and working on manuscripts, now published or in press, listed in the publications section of this newsletter.



Brian Chase wearing his team's favourite colours on site in northern Namibia

Robyn Pickering University of Bern

In the April of 2005 I started a PhD with Prof. Jan Kramers at the University of Bern in Switzerland looking into the Uranium-Lead dating of Sterkfontein and some of the other similar aged sites in the Cradle of Humankind World Heritage Site. This was my dream project and I was excited at the prospect of learning about a new technique as well as moving to a neutral country only twice the size of Swaziland in the middle of Europe. Prof Tim Partridge agreed to co-supervise me, and urged me to re-look at the stratigraphy at Sterkfontein, to provide a new framework for the hopefully extensive suite of new dates. U-Pb dating of speleothem material has been successfully undertaken, however methods of sample preparation, measurement and age calculations are far from standard and more realistically are still experimental. I certainly jumped into the deep end, and was somewhat over whelmed by Switzerland and the complexity of mass spectrometers, ultra clean labs, pitifully low Uranium concentrations in my samples and Swiss German! But after just over two years, we have a robust method for preparing and measuring the speleothem material and our dates for Sterkfontein and Coopers are in agreement with the faunal age estimations. There is still much to be done and I plan to spend the coming winter locked in the lab. With maybe a few excursions to go skiing! Adjusting to life in Bern and Switzerland took some time, but I now speak enough German to get by, apparently with a Swiss accent. Bern is an hour from the Alps, and the mountains are truly magnificent – the sediment transport and erosion in a place undergoing active uplift is endlessly impressive; as are the glaciers. I do miss the sunny skies of South Africa and look forward to maybe presenting some new ages for Sterkfontein at the next SASQUA meeting. A paper on the Uranium-Thorium dating of Gladysvale Cave and the link between the cave deposits and changing climatic conditions (my masters' work) is coming out in the *Journal of Human Evolution* later this year.



Robyn at the Aletsch Glacier, the longest in Europe, in the Wallis in south-western Switzerland.

Sue Ringrose University of Botswana

Review of Quaternary studies in northern Botswana

Much of the work undertaken by the Harry Oppenheimer Okavango Research Centre (HOORC) led group (including S. Ringrose, P. Huntsman-Mapila, S. Coetzee, and S. Diskin) has focused on determining palaeo-environmental conditions pertaining to the origin of the Okavango alluvial fan. Building on work of for instance, McCarthy et al., and Thomas and Shaw, these studies were largely stimulated by the late Henri Kampunzu and included early work on indicators of sediment provenance in the Okavango and the major and trace element composition of Kalahari duricrusts. The multiple origin of sediments infilling the Makgadikgadi-Okavango-Zambezi (MOZ) basin was established along with the antiquity of the inflowing Kalahari rivers, through TL dating.

Later work expanded to include the Lake Ngami basin where samples from a 4.6 m deep profile were found to be diatom rich and these, with the geochemical results, were used as indicators of high and low lake levels within the basin. Work on a further outflow system, the Makgadikgadi Pans, considered new TL and geochemical evidence from duricrusted strandlines which exhibit evidence for early freshwater environments followed by

the Mg rich calcretisation of macrophytes and fungal hyphae under possibly closed basin conditions. Calcretisation was followed by silicification, suggesting that reduced pH conditions were largely prevalent in littoral porewaters. The distribution of dated samples infers that lake levels were not fixed but reacted rapidly and sensitively to seasonal changes in the inflow-evaporation balance while also responding to secular climatic or tectonic events.

Current work is considering broader flooding environments including the extension of the Okavango system over the washed dunes to the south while more detailed trace element analyses of the Makgadikgadi Pans duricrusts is beginning to unravel some of the palaeo-environmental history of the palaeo-lake through time. Additional work in co-operation with the Oklahoma State University has begun in the Mababe depression where two 7 m and 5 m trenches have revealed major diatom sequences, the samples from which are currently being analysed.

Jürgen Runge University of Frankfurt

Palaeoecology of Africa....is back!

I would like to announce the re-edition of the series 'Palaeoecology of Africa' with the publication of Palaeoecology of Africa - Vol. - 28 – *International Yearbook of Landscape Evolution and Palaeoenvironments*. Contributions to Volume 28 mainly came from an interdisciplinary workshop on Dynamics of forest ecosystems during the Holocene held at Cameroon's capital Yaoundé in March 2006.

Preparations are already running for the next volume of PoA (Vol. 29) on Holocene environmental history of the Central Sahara that will be edited together with Roland Baumhauer from the University of Würzburg. In this context I would like to address especially the editorial board to propose further manuscripts and workshops/conferences for volumes to be edited in the future. As already discussed at the last SASQUA conference, I would like to propose that at least some of the regular SASQUA contributions could also be included

into the series, as it has been the case in earlier years. Please let me know your views about this.

Louis Scott
University of the Free State

J. A. Coetzee 1921-2007

Members received the sad news of the passing away on the 28th of April 2007, of one of SASQUA earliest and most-respected members, Joey Coetzee, a pioneer in Quaternary studies in Africa. We will remember her for her groundbreaking fossil-pollen research in East and Southern Africa that included studies from sites like Sacred Lake (Mount Kenya) and the warm springs at Aliwal North (Coetzee, 1964, 1967). Her doctor's thesis (Coetzee, 1967) is probably the most cited palynological paper from the African continent. The journal *Progress in Physical Geography* therefore aptly featured it as a classic work, sadly only months after she passed away (Meadows, 2007). In her research, she collaborated with the late Professor Eduard M. van Zinderen Bakker, and was one of the first scientists to show how glacial conditions influenced the tropical region. In her later pollen research during the 1970's and 80's she also made important discoveries in connection with the origin of fynbos vegetation of the southwestern Cape. She showed how fynbos evolved in the region during the Tertiary period after replacing subtropical forest elements that included palms and other woodland elements. For several years, between 1978 and 1988, she served as editor for the Balkema publication *Palaeoecology of Africa and the surrounding islands*. An obituary of her is in press in the *Review of Palaeobotany and Palynology* (Scott, 2007).



The late Joey Coetzee

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Arnaud Temme
Dept of Environmental Sciences ,
Wageningen University and
Research Centre

Please find below an adapted abstract for a paper that I and co-authors Jantiene Baartman, Greg Botha, Tom Veldkamp, Toine

Jongmans and Jakob Wallinga , submitted to *Geomorphology*.

Climate controls on Late Pleistocene landscape evolution of Okhombe valley, KwaZulu-Natal, South-Africa (Submitted)

Hillslopes in central and western parts of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa are often mantled by colluvial sediments of the Masotcheni Formation. These sediments have accreted in response to several cycles of deposition, pedogenesis and incomplete erosion. Climatic controls on these cycles are incompletely known. We have combined results from fieldwork, micromorphology, stable carbon isotope analysis and Optically Stimulated Luminescence dating of Masotcheni Formation sediments from the Okhombe valley in the Drakensberg foothills. Deposition in the area had at least 11 phases, starting before 42 ka and ending before 0.17 ka. The first six deposits (from before 42 ka to after 29 ka) resulted from the interplay between slope processes and fluvial redistribution under cold conditions. Solifluction, but not necessarily gelifluction, was the most important slope process. No deposits have been found from the Last Glacial Maximum, arguably because this period was too dry. The last five deposits (from about 11 ka to before 0.17 ka) resulted from fluvial redistribution of upslope material and older deposits under increasing precipitation. Current extreme gully erosion in the Masotcheni Formation indicates a lack of available upslope material, leaving downslope deposits as the only sediment source for fluvial redistribution. This hypothesis for landscape response to climate change may be able to explain how climate controlled landscape processes in other Masotcheni Formation sites. In the research area and elsewhere, this proposition may be tested with numerical landscape evolution models. We are currently working on that within the same research project of Wageningen University, The Netherlands.

*AT has requested that since this article is not yet published it should not yet be quoted.

Francis Thackeray Transvaal Museum

Celebrating the 60th anniversary of the discovery of Mrs. Ples, with HOPE for the future of palaeoanthropology in South Africa

This year we celebrate the diamond anniversary of the discovery of "Mrs Ples", a distant relative of all humankind. The fossil skull was discovered in 1947 by Robert Broom and John Robinson of the Transvaal Museum.



Francis Thackeray with some of the casts of Mrs Ples, for distribution to schools

"Mrs Ples" (the most complete cranium of *Australopithecus africanus*) is 2.15 million years old, based on palaeomagnetic data and faunal associations. An exhibition will be opened in November at the Transvaal Museum to mark the discovery of the hominid. Newly obtained images of the virtual "brain" (endocranial cast) of Mrs Ples (based on CT scans obtained in collaboration with Jose Braga, Paul Sabatier University, Toulouse) will be exhibited, demonstrating assymetry of the brain, implying that Mrs Ples was probably right-handed.

In addition, we are distributing replicas of Mrs Ples to schools, with the objective of making casts available to every school in South Africa within the next 10 years. Waterkloof House Preparatory School (Old Boys Committee) has made a substantial and generous donation towards this goal, focussing initially on primary schools in Pretoria.

The photograph shows Francis Thackeray with some of the casts of Mrs Ples, for distribution to schools. The intention is to stimulate an interest in palaeontology among learners, and to encourage them to turn to palaeontology as a career.

It is most unfortunate that, while South Africa has such a rich palaeoanthropological heritage, we have few South African palaeoanthropologists. We need to stimulate an interest among young South Africans who will follow in the footsteps of Professor Phillip Tobias and Bob Brain.

The Transvaal Museum has established a Human Origins and Past Environments (HOPE) programme which is growing, supported by young researchers from South Africa, France and the USA. It is hoped that the HOPE programme will continue to grow in the years ahead.

Stephan Woodborne QUADRU

What is happening at QUADRU?

"What is happening at QUADRU?" The CSIR laboratory formerly known as the Quaternary Dating Research Unit (QUADRU) has served the academic community for nearly 50 years with a range of dating and stable isotope services. Over the last two years there have been a number of changes that have influenced the way in which the facility operates. The driving force was a CSIR-level restructuring (called "Beyond 60", since it coincided with the 60-year anniversary of the CSIR), involving a re-alignment of all units with the mandate of the organisation. Beyond 60 led to changes in the range of "products" on offer, the way in which research is done, and in the staff compliment. The 12 people that comprised QUADRU in 2001 have transformed into 11 CSIR staff plus a variable number of graduate student interns in the Ecosystem Processes and Dynamics (EPD) group.

Possibly the most profound change was in the research agenda. QUADRU did stable isotope

science, luminescence dating and radiocarbon science. Much of the work had become of a routine, service-provision nature which did not fit with the CSIR mandate of knowledge generation, and could in some instances be done better elsewhere. A fresh research-oriented vision was needed that used the skills and facilities developed in QUADRU, but applied them to new challenges.

Luminescence dating was a facility where we lacked the critical mass to do cutting-edge research or to provide a cost-effective service because of the slow throughput of samples. Funds from the QUADRU bank account, money held in trust for the heritage community that we served, had been used to buy a luminescence reader. After lengthy negotiations with several institutions, and the loss of key staff, an agreement has been reached to transfer the luminescence instruments to the new Origins Centre at the University of the Witwatersrand, as soon as a dedicated laboratory has been built. To help overcome the capacity problem, a proposal has been submitted to treasury to buy an additional luminescence reader for that facility.

The radiocarbon facility continues to do archaeological dating work for the broader community as well as serving an in-house research agenda involving the use of radiocarbon as a time specific tracer to better understand the working of the Earth System. From a dating perspective we need to know *that* atmospheric ^{14}C fluctuated through time, but from an Earth System science perspective it is more important to know *why*. The research aims to improve our understanding of past Earth Systems and feed this into the science of the global carbon cycle and climate change.

Similarly, stable isotope science is an extremely powerful technique in the field of Earth System science. The EPD isotope facility continues to do analyses for outside organisations, and especially in collaboration with graduate students and researchers at universities (we offer very advantageous rates for this kind of arrangement, which has the added benefit of training students in isotope techniques).

The restructuring coincided with infrastructure refurbishments. The laboratory space was

renovated and the environment for doing science is greatly enhanced. The CSIR invested R3.4 million in a new light-isotopes mass spectrometer. Over 20 000 analyses have already been performed on this state-of-the-art instrument in its first year of operation, many of them by collaborating graduate students. New air conditioners, fundamental to the accuracy of the detection systems, were installed. Temperature fluctuations before and during the commissioning of the air conditioners led to some unacceptable analyses, but the quality control system that is in place ensured that no substandard results were published.

The laboratory has participated very successfully in the Fourth Inter-laboratory Radiocarbon Inter-comparison (FIRI). The same protocols are used for all analyses done on behalf of clients as were used in FIRI. The analytical system is now performing better than ever it did.

The QUADRU web site was decommissioned, and a new EPD one will soon be commissioned. The facility to pre-purchase analyses has fallen away and with it the board that previously controlled the associated QUADRU bank account. The latter has been closed and business is now contracted with the CSIR.

The new EPD isotope facility continues what QUADRU started. It strives for the utmost quality in its analyses, and looks forward to partnering with the academic community for another 50 years.

We can be contacted as follows:

EPD isotope facility Natural Resources and the Environment CSIR Building 4E Meiring Naude Road Brummeria		EPD isotope facility Natural Resources and the Environment CSIR Box 067 Pretoria 0001
Contact	E-mail	Office Telephone
Stephan Woodborne	SWoodbor@CSIR.co.za	+27 12 841 2145
Marc Pienaar	MPienaar@CSIR.co.za	+27 12 841 4325
Caroline Duncan	CDuncan@CSIR.co.za	+27 12 841 2300

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SASQUA 2007

Southern African Society for Quaternary Research

**XVII Biennial Congress, Howick, KwaZulu Natal,
11-13 April 2007**

Minutes of the BGM.

12:00 – 13:30

1. Welcome

The President, Stefan Grab, welcomed all the members of SASQUA present (30) and new members and thanked Greg Botha and his team of Chrissie Sievers, Rodney Maud, Pat Dlamini, Rebecca Singh and the Pietermaritzburg Council for Geosciences for organising the conference. The conference has been very successful and outstanding both from the organisational and academic points of view. Stefan also thanked the outgoing Council for all their efforts. Rodney Maud thanked Stefan for his contribution as President.

2005-2007 Council:

President	Stefan Grab
Vice President/President Elect	Mike Meadows
Treasurer	Greg Botha
Secretary	Marion Bamford
Newsletter Editor	Jeanette Smith
Student Representative	Caren Herbert
Other Members	James Brink Peter Holmes Amanda Esterhuysen Renato Spaggiari Frank Netterberg Tim Partridge Angela Kharuxas Amanda Rau

2. Apologies

Mike Meadows, John Compton, Peter Holmes, Frank Netterberg, Amanda Esterhuysen, Margaret Avery, Francis Thackeray, Bernie Moon, Ingrid Stengel, Philippa Huntsman-Mapila, Jurgen Runge.

3. Minutes of the last BGM

These had been circulated about a month before this BGM by email and were approved by Rodney Maud, seconded by Tim Partridge. Approved.

4. Matters Arising

Proceedings of this conference, new editorship of Palaeoecology of Africa, East African Quaternary Association; all to be dealt with in due course.

5. Oliver Davies Medal for Best Student Publication in 2005-2007 period

Stefan reminded members that this is a prestigious award for students who have published their own research work in a recognised (local or international) peer-reviewed journal during the period between the present and preceding conferences. Candidates are to be motivated by their

supervisors and the papers circulated by email to the selection committee (come Council Members). The two candidates put forward were

- a) Geeske Langejans, supervisors Tom Huffman and Kathy Kuman of Wits University, paper: Starch grain analysis on Late Iron Age grindstones from South Africa. *Southern African Humanities* 18(2), 61-91, December 2006.
- b) Stephanie Mills, supervisor Stefan Grab, Wits University, paper: Debris ridges along the southern Drakensberg escarpment as evidence for Quaternary glaciation in southern Africa. *Quaternary International* 129, 61-73, 2005. Authors Mills S.C. and Grab, S.W.

The medal was awarded to **Stephanie Mills** together with a R1000 cash prize. (An increase in the cash prize was approved by the Council (minutes for 10 April 2007).

Trevor Hill reminded members that there are very few companies in South Africa who will manufacture medals in small numbers and that creating the dyes was very expensive. Stefan said that the Council had discussed this at the meeting (10 April) and the new Council would look into getting the last remaining medal from Margaret Avery copied and then engraved for this year's winner.

6. Best Student Paper and Best Student Poster

Each award is a R600 cash prize and selection was by a few Council Members

Candidates:

Paper

Rebecca Singh
Magila Barré
Stephanie Mills
Neil Tinmouth
Andy Richardson
Charl Bosman

Poster

Fiona Ballantyne
Hayley Cawthra
Caroline Duncan
Kelly Kirsten-Sardinha
Fabien Morganti

Winners:

Charl Bosman

Caroline Duncan

7. INQUA 2007 and SA-ICSU

Greg Botha reported that

a) the next INQUA Congress will be in Cairns, Australia from 28 July to 3 August 2007 and registrations had already exceeded all expectations with at least 1450 to date. Margaret Avery has been nominated as Vice President again and voting will take place at this meeting.

b) INQUA is now a full member of ICSU and this should raise the profile of South African Quaternary research and hopefully the sustainability of membership and especially of students who often leave the society after graduating and doing post doctoral studies overseas.

c) SASQUA needs more HDSA students.

d) Just prior to this conference Greg Botha and members of the Council for Geosciences ran a workshop for learners in the Pietermaritzburg area to create an awareness of earth sciences and Quaternary research. They had a series of lectures from various researchers and then a GPS mapping exercise with assistance from an outside company. The future of SASQUA and INQUA-ICSU is dependant on these students so it is important to attract them now. Such workshops are a lot of work but should be held regularly.

e) The ICSU Regional Office Africa Chairman is Sospeter Mohangu and he and others are driving four research thrusts in Africa which contain several themes that will be applicable to SASQUA members. The two most relevant ones are a) Global Climate Change and b) Human and Natural Geohazards. This ICSU ROA Committee will be meeting in Kampala, Uganda on 22-25 July. Rebecca Singh from the Pietermaritzburg Council for Geosciences will present her work there.

SASQUA members should take advantage of these upcoming opportunities. Members can contact Greg or Marion if they want the document emailed to them.

8. Links with other societies

- a) Prof Jorg Rabassa of Argentina is setting up a Quaternary society and would like to form strong links with SASQUA. The council has discussed this and Mike Meadows will contact him to establish how to form these links, possibly by exchanging newsletters and perhaps on more individual bases.
- b) Trevor Hill reported that a new or revived East African Quaternary Society had just been set up, meeting in early June in Uganda, and they would like to establish links with SASQUA. He will pass the details onto Mike Meadows to make formal contact.

9. Presidents Report

Stefan Grab

The length of the President's report usually provides a reflection on the level of activity and initiative the Society has embraced over this last inter-congress period. This will be a short report.

Many thanks to all SASQUA members for giving me the opportunity to serve as President over the last two years. Steering SASQUA has been both a privilege and challenge. A privilege because SASQUA consists of many fine members, both past and present, who have built an excellent name for southern African Quaternary Research. The challenge is to keep the society proactive during the inter-congress period.

We indeed are a Society of endurance and longevity as this, according to our records, is the 17th SASQUA Conference. Our membership has dropped from about 130, two years ago, to a current standing of about 110, of which only half are paid up. According to the constitution, we need to strike off the roll of the Society, those whose subs are 2 years in arrears. Letters were sent out in 2005 to remind members that subs were due; despite the reminder, we have sadly lost many past members due to non payment.

Without substantial participation from SASQUA and some council members, it has been difficult to work towards some of the short-term goals set out in our 2005 Newsletter. Thus most of these goals remain unaccomplished. I realize that possibly the Society's greatest challenge is the ever increasing demands on our academic and professional time, which affords most of us little time to invest in the Society. But for the Society to truly thrive we need greater participation from members during the inter-congress period. A further challenge for southern African Quaternary research over the last two years has been the restructuring of our local Quaternary dating facilities and other research centers.

Active members such as Jeanette Smith and Julia Lee-Thorp have been offered positions abroad during recent years. Although we are sad to see prominent members move abroad, this bodes well for the standard of Quaternary science in southern Africa. Jeanette has continued to serve us well with an annual newsletter, which not only has been informative but has improved in quality from year to year. Jeanette has served as Newsletter editor for the past five years and has announced that she will not stand for reelection. Many thanks to Jeanette and Julia for their valued input over the years – we wish them well in their new endeavors.

SASQUA hosted an afternoon seminar in Gauteng during 2006. Several interesting talks were presented by Dave Nash, Marion Bamford, Claire Kelso and Coleen Vogel, which was followed by a cocktail function. Hopefully such seminars will take place at additional centers next year.

SASQUA remains active within the INQUA community and particular thanks to Margaret Avery, Tim Partridge and Greg Botha for their tireless service in this regard.

Undoubtedly our Biennial conferences are of high organizational and academic standards, and in essence are what keep our society alive. This conference has been no exception, and particular thanks to Greg Botha and his team. My thanks to the outgoing SASQUA Committee, and particularly to Marion Bamford and Greg Botha for their support and tireless service to SASQUA.

I believe that much work lies ahead for SASQUA during the forthcoming year, particularly to create a vision and to actively work towards some short-term goals. With a constant stream of enthusiastic students interested in Quaternary Science, the future surely looks promising. Mike Meadows is about to take over the position of SASQUA president and I have every confidence that he will lead with excellence. My very best wishes to Mike, the new Council and members of SASQUA.

10. Treasurer's Report

Greg Botha

There is a need to update payments and encourage members to pay as we have had to remove some members for long standing arrears.

Expenditure:

- a) The NRF and SASQUA supported the costs of the keynote speaker, Rob Fitzpatrick from CSIRO, Adelaide, Australia
- b) Abstracts have been printed and will be sent to non-attending members.
- c) funds were supplied for the Wits June 2006 SASQUA series of talks and social function,
- d) no expenses for the newsletter or communication by email
- e) some advances were made for this conference but will be repaid and there may be some profit.
- f) Rodney Maud still has signing powers so can be contacted in any emergency
- g) SASQUA had to comply with the new FICA regulations earlier this year and the CoG has been made the physical address for the society.
- h) The token thanks to the secretary for the treasurer, Pat Dlamini, has been increased by Council to R1000.

11. Secretary's Report

Marion Bamford

- a) Some problems were encountered prior to the conference as her email address was migrated and not all messages were received.
- b) The mailing list needs to be regularly updated as some messages are still returned.
- c) An updated members list will be emailed to all SASQUA Members in the near future.

12. SASQUA Newsletter

Jeanette Smith has been the editor for at least 5 years and we have seen an improvement in its presentation, however Jeanette has had many problems in trying to get news from some members. She now resigns from this duty but has some suggestions or recommendations to make for the new editor:

- a) Have twice yearly newsletters – although it is difficult to get news!
- b) Have regional subeditors to collect the news and pas it onto the editor
- c) Supervisors should encourage their students to sent in reports for the newsletter – this makes it more personal
- d) Web mailing rather than bulk mailing but this may lose some of the personal touch and be undesirable or inconvenient for some members
- e) Have a web link so photos and other news or societies can be accessed.

Jeanette was thanked for all her hard work.

13. Council Elections

To avoid the previous problems of last minute nominations of members for Council and then poor or no activity by these members, the present President sent out a request for nominations and acceptance by nominees at least a month before the BGM. He also requested that fewer members be appointed and that each has a portfolio for which he is responsible and has to report back. Further he suggested that the Assistant Secretary portfolio be dropped and instead two portfolios, Education Liaison and Conference Organiser be instituted (see email correspondence filed). These were accepted and nominations were received together with recommended portfolios. The only duplications were two nominees and one portfolio: Tim Partridge and Brian Chase; Vice President. In the absence of Brian Chase and also the question of his future permanence in southern Africa Tim Partridge was voted in as Vice President.

Incoming Council 2007-2009:

President	Mike Meadows
Vice President	Tim Partridge
Past President	Stefan Grab
Treasurer	Greg Botha
Secretary	Marion Bamford
Education liaison	Ingrid Stengel
Newsletter Editor	Philippa Huntsman-Mapila
Student rep.	Martin Kekana
Conference organiser	Peter Holmes

14. Venue for next conference – April 2009

Two offers were received:

- a) Maun and the Harry Oppenheimer Okavango Research Centre (University of Botswana) from Philippa Huntsman-Mapila. This would be an attractive venue as they have good facilities and there are interesting sites to visit nearby but delegates thought it would be a long way to travel especially for students.
- b) Knysna and Mike Meadows of UCT and Peter Holmes of UFS who have done much field work in the area. A variety of facilities are there.

Vote Maun – 5; Knysna – 10.

The 2009 conference will be in Knysna and Peter Holmes will chair the organising committee.

15. Additional Items

Conference proceedings

Jurgen Runge, a SASQUA member, is the new editor of the revamped journal "Palaeoecology of Africa" in which SASQUA has published its conference proceedings a number of times. Klaus Heine has now retired and Taylor and Francis have taken over the publishing of this journal. The publication of about five volumes is required for the journal to be assessed before it can qualify for ISI listing so until that time most academics would not benefit from publishing in the journal. However, since we have had a long-standing association with the journal we would like to support it, it was suggested that the new Council approach Jurgen Runge and ask for an assurance that they will apply for such a listing and we will publish a theme volume in Palaeoecology of Africa in 2009.

Conference Field trip

Lyn Wadley, Chrissie Sievers and Rodney Maud were thanked for the most enjoyable field trip to Sibudu Cave Shelter on the Tongati River on Thursday afternoon. The fact that the bus got stuck in the soft sand of the mealie field and delayed our departure just added to the camaraderie of the day, gave the men a chance to flex their muscles and gave Tim's land drover a work out.

The meeting closed at 13:30.