

Caseclosed

Closure of the Bernissart Iguanodon Crime Scene

DURATION 15/06/2019 – 15/06/2021	BUDGET 20 000 €
Valorisation of the BRAIN-be project COLDCASE	

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Bernissart Iguanodons constitute a unique fossil assemblage of worldwide reputation and are also an important part of the Belgian cultural and scientific heritages. In order to valorise the above summarized results, we here propose a coordinated communication strategy. The main focus will be to highlight the exceptional character of the locality and to spread the scientific information collected during the Coldcase project. It is for us an invaluable opportunity to reveal a whole ecosystem in its complexity but also to better explain the scientific processes that allowed this information to be gathered.

As a consequence, the targeted audience is of two types; first, the scientific community and second the general public. Three actions are proposed:

Action 1: the organisation of an international meeting [target: scientific community]

Action 2: the launching of a website [target: scientific community/general public]

Action 3: the creation of a play [target: general public]

Workplan and tasks description

Action 1: Organisation of an international meeting

In addition to the publication of all results in international peer reviewed journals, we will organise an international meeting in Brussels. At our invitation, the 2019 international meeting of the European Association of Vertebrate Palaeontologists (EAVP) will be organized at the Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences, from June 24th to 28th, 2019. During this meeting a special symposium will be held to present the main results of the Coldcase project.

Scientific reunions, in gathering scientists from different fields in a same place, are of great importance in terms of networking and diffusion of the knowledge. But above all, the organisation of a thematic symposium on Bernissart will allow to reunite different point of views on a same problematics. It brings together fields that are often separated in terms of journal and meetings.

This EAVP meeting will be co-organized by RBINS palaeontologists, together with Koen Stein (VUB, partner of the Case Closed project), Jean-Marc Baele (UMons, partner of the Case Closed project), and Valentin Fischer (ULiège).

Action 2: Let us make it virtual

Dinosaurs in general, but *Iguanodon* particularly in Belgium, trigger strong interest from the general public. Because of that, Bernissart became and is still one of the most prestigious palaeontological localities worldwide. The two last actions will mainly focus on the transfer to the general public of not only the knowledge and final results obtained by Coldcase, but also on the learning and research process followed by the scientific team. To do so, we propose in this second action the creation of a website providing easy access to the main results of the project.

The website will be designed to be useful both to the scientific community and to the general public:

- The historical and scientific documents at the base of the project, including the maps and plans drawn during the 1878-1881 excavations.
- All the available historical documents around the Bernissart Iguanodons.
- Photographs and illustrations of the main fossils that were collected in and around the Bernissart area.
- The main results of the research projects.
- A virtual visit of the Bernissart mine.
- An interactive game for the youngest generation.



Caseclosed

During the Coldcase project most of the preparation work has been achieved to prepare this website. So, all documents at hand have been classified and digitized (a Microsoft Excell database is available); the whole fossil collection has been digitalized and has been included in the RBINS database (plants, invertebrates, vertebrates); most of the results have been gathered and are published or about to be published.

The setting up of the website will require the hiring of an external webcreator that will work together with the different partner of the project. The creation of this website represents in our opinion an important step in the divulgation of the results of the Coldcase project. It is however as well an invaluable opportunity to highlight the research going on in the federal institutions.

Action 3: towards a Broadway theatre play !

In this valorisation project, not only the results of the research are important but also the scientific process itself. The above mentioned interest of the general public for the dinosaurs is in our opinion an invaluable opportunity to make science more popular. In this third action, we propose to adapt an already existing theatre play to present to a general audience the processes behind the scientific work.

Contacts have already been established with the theatre company "Compagnie des Passeurs de Rêves". They propose a play in five scenes with the following pitch:

At the occasion of the 140th anniversary of the discovery of the Iguanodons in Bernissart, an unknown stranger sends to the museum a mysterious box labelled: exhibit...

Summoned by the same stranger, three investigators will try to discover why the famous Iguanodon bernisartensis is still at the center of a cold case!

The play will take place in the Natural History Museum itself. Children, youngsters and adults will be driven through the museum. There, they will explore different locations including historical offices, laboratories and public galleries. Mixing different acting styles, from the marionette to the video and the shadow theater, the play is intended for all publics from 6 years old onwards.

In practice, four representations are foreseen spread on two days. The play will be translated in Dutch. So, there will be a day of representation in French and another in Dutch.

External partners

- European Association of Vertebrate Palaeontology (organisation of the 2019 meeting).
As treasurer of the EAVP, Koen Stein is the official representative of this association in the Case Closed project. The organization of the 2019 meeting in Brussels has already been launched: <https://www.facebook.com/EAVPalaeo>; #EAVP2019.
- Valentin Fischer (Evolution and Diversity Dynamics lab, ULiège).
Co-organizer of the EAVP meeting.
- Compagnie des Passeurs de Rêves: theatre play: «Bernisartensis, une affaire non- classée». <https://www.passeursdereves.be>

CONTACT INFORMATION

Coordinator

Pascal GODEFROIT

Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences (RBINS)

Pascal.Godefroit@naturalsciences.be

Partners

Jean-Marc BAELE

Université de Mons (UMons)

Jean-Marc.BAELE@umons.ac.be

Koen STEIN

Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB)

Koen.Stein@vub.be

BELGIAN SCIENCE POLICY OFFICE

WTC III - Simon Bolivarlaan 30 Boulevard Simon Bolivar
B-1000 Brussels

Tel. +32 (0)2 238 34 11

<http://www.belspo.be/brain-be/> • Email : BRAIN-be@belspo.be