Dinosaur Footprint Problem

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"Dinosaur footprints look pretty durable. They were made in mud, but by the time palaeontologists find them the mud has turned to rock. Inevitably, the footprint wears away over the years, but they still seem substantial enough to withstand natural assault, or so South African palaeontologist Theagarten Lingham-Soliar thought, "according to a report in *New Scientist*".

26 June 2004, p56, which goes on to say: "When he found a rare metre-wide footprint of a giant brachiosaur in Zimbabwe, he decided it would be safe to go off and collect the latex he needed to cast a mould of the track. Alas, he hadn't reckoned with today's closest approximation to a dinosaur. By the time he got back to the footprint, a herd of elephants had obliterated it."

Editorial Comment: Several things need to be made clear about this report:

Time does not turn mud to rock, pressure or cement does. In this case the mudstone was still so weak that the footprint was obliterated by newer feet, the elephants.

Secondly, prints only form if mud is already setting and is not too soupy to preserve the track, again a very limited window of time.

Lastly, fossil prints can only be preserved if they are covered before they are eroded. In this case erosion was a very short time indeed. Time is not the clue, process is. Strange how we live in a world where people think time is the key, when it's really the enemy. (Ref fossilization, tracks, Africa)