

## **Report by Dr Corrie Williams on Exhibition potential from Namibian Field Conference Farm Aar 9 – 12 September 2011.**

Attending the Field Conference at Farm Aar provided first-hand knowledge of the Precambrian fieldsite and the challenges facing the display and interpretation of materials in that area.

As an area of interest to the general public to raise awareness of the unique geology and flora, Farm Aar has a great potential to provide an ecotourism attraction in the south eastern Namibian region:

- It is a leisurely 8 hour drive from Windhoek on sealed, good roads and has stunning scenery on both the drive and at the farm itself.
- There is safe, comfortable farm house to stay in.
- The geological sites are easy to access via gravel roads.
- Although initially barren to look at, the area has a hugely diverse range of plants (including many Aloes, grasses and rare water tolerant species like *Lithops*)
- Interesting archaeological history (both from the prehistoric petroglyphs and modern era German telegraph station remains).

There would be a range of challenges to overcome to allow this site to become a well visited exhibition centre showcasing the Precambrian geology of Farm Aar:

- Perception of safety problems travelling in Africa. Namibia has a good reputation in the area, but is still placed in a continent of political and social unrest. This problem is diminishing with the strengthening of the rule of law and social advances in Namibia.
- Advances will be required to make travel information for visitors accessible and easy to understand. This would include (but is not limited to) accurate maps of the area, with mileage counters on the instructions that include photos of landmarks. The current road signage in the area is accurate, but available maps are not, and this makes visiting the area difficult.
- Information on other local attractions and amenities will be needed. For example knowing that food and petrol can be accessed from nearby towns of Aus and Helmeringhausen. This information could also include "what to bring" eg clothing and other helpful ideas eg mobile phone coverage.
- At the Farm itself more signage is required on the ground. There are some basic walking tracks around the sites on the farm, but these need further marking, as they are not clear. Ideally these would be made of either metal or stone, as the extremes of temperature in the area does degrade wood fairly quickly. There is a lot of local stone in the area that could be utilised to make cairns (cement would be required to stop them toppling).
- It would be helpful to produce a group of flyers that outline the attractions of the farm: one on archaeology, one on the plants and one on the geology. A laminated set of these could be borrowed from the farm house Museum area and returned after the days use. Pdf versions could be available via the web for use before arrival.