

Nama Field Conference Report

Farm Aar, South-west Namibia. 4-12 September 2011.

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The Field conference was held at the conclusion of a three-week field research season where fossil site excavations were conducted at a number of previously designated and partially excavated sites. These site workings, (from previous seasons 2006, 2008 and 2009), were concluded and together with the completion of extensive and detailed local geological mapping conducted during this season, further productive sites were able to be successfully identified. Importantly, this process enabled the conclusions drawn from this research, to be tested for their validity and predictive value. The process has brought together international expertise and these particular investigations into the Nama biota have been conducted with leading researchers invited from the Australian, Russian and Newfoundland sequences.

The delegates to the conference were introduced to the regional geology and given presentations on the recent research undertaken at Aar Farm with respect to its significance to the issues of evolutionary and paleoenvironmental developments during the Ediacaran. The specific achievements culminating from this season were presented and discussed with the view to planning the following days activities; providing delegates with the opportunity to excavate and prepare fossils from the newly predicted depositions. From my personal role in this, the delegates were able to see how the multidisciplinary approach was assisting in the morphological reconstructions of the Nama biota.

In conjunction with the heritage and geological values of the Aar Farm property, active hands-on insights into the processes of the research conducted and the ways in which the research is to be presented were to become vital components of any future interpretive processes. The delegates were able to experience the extensive archaeological art that survives on the property in addition to the palaeontological material. Against this cultural background, my contemporary artistic practice during the field season and conference was deliberately broad; to encompass not only the natural geological aspects of the landscape and wildlife that inhabits it, but also its application to the graphics and reconstruction illustration required to present the science to professional and wider audiences. To demonstrate to the delegates to the conference, how this form of communication can be used was my principal focus in my presentations.