

Archaeological encounters with recent Karoo history

Professor Simon Hall

In conjunction with a Special General Meeting and the Trans-Vaal Branch Annual General Meeting

Date: Thursday 19 May *Time:* 19:30

Venue: The auditorium, Roedean School, 35 Princess of Wales Terrace, Parktown, Johannesburg

Charge: Members free Non-members R30

The landscape of the interior plateau referred to as the Karoo has meant different things to different people, both now and in the past. For !Xam hunter-gatherers it was home in all the complexity of the word, a place of deep dwelling, layered with meaning and memory that was etched into its rocks. For Khoe pastoralists it was a networked home of many places built around a delicate balance between rain, water and grazing. The word Karoo was morphed from Khoe through Dutch and invokes the need for balanced living in a hard and barren place. From the 18th century the Karoo landscape received another layer of dwelling as trekboers of Dutch and German descent violently asserted themselves upon its people, but also assented to the Karoo's particular demands. In the 19th century the British arrived and contributed to a new pastoralism based around merino sheep and wool production that pushed the Karoo horizons outwards towards a global export economy. This talk discusses some of the 19th century archaeological residues related to this historical layering and its rich cultural *mélange* and pursues two interrelated themes. One addresses the contribution these residues may make to an understanding of the Karoo, particularly during the 19th century, when the history of the region is also documented. The second acknowledges the brutal dispossession of home suffered by Khoesan from the 18th century but highlights archaeological contributions that put them back on this landscape by recognising their cultural continuity.

Simon Hall completed an honours in archaeology at UCT and obtained a Masters degree from WITS. From 1980 he was curator of archaeology at the Albany Museum and during this time his research was on the Holocene LSA sequence of the Fish River Basin and this topic formed the basis of his DPhil awarded in 1990. Currently he is an Associate Professor at UCT. He is a past President of the SA Archaeological Society.



Red Stone Hills, Southern Karoo