



ARCHAEOLOGY AND PALAEOONTOLOGY

The National Museum in Bloemfontein has a large variety of archaeological exhibits and is renowned, both locally and internationally, for its most important exhibit — the Florisbad skull. This skull fragment was discovered in 1932, at Florisbad, a natural mineral spring, just north of the city of Bloemfontein.

Today, the Florisbad skull is accepted as that of an archaic *Homo sapiens* (people who were almost, but not entirely modern humans) and it is dated at approximately 260 000 years old. Fully modern humans — such as the San hunters living at Florisbad at the time — were believed to have appeared in Southern Africa about 120 000 years ago. Fossil finds were during the 1920s and 1930s excavations at the Florisbad site yielded interesting discoveries such as rare and distinct animal fossils.

The research laboratory at Florisbad now houses several fossil mammal collections from the central interior and an osteological collection of modern mammals — one of only three such facilities in South Africa. San Rock Art in The Rock Art Department of the National Museum is one of only two full-time rock art research entities in southern Africa. The Department has a collection of some engravings and paintings on display.

The paintings are exquisitely engraved and painted images which inform the modern society about the complex religious and social lives led by the San communities who lived in this area. This site is linked with the Tandjesberg rock art site located 14 km northeast of Ladybrand.



Human cranium

