

Foreword

Pyrometallurgy has played a very important role in southern Africa for at least four centuries. It continues to do so, and recent years have seen many exciting developments in pyrometallurgical technology. The wonderfully diverse rich mineral deposits in this area of the world have provided some unique opportunities for industrial processes to be established.

The 'Southern African Pyrometallurgy 2006' conference was set up to showcase southern African pyrometallurgical operations, and to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas between people working at various types of smelters. Papers have been obtained from a wide variety of pyrometallurgical plants in southern Africa. These descriptions of plant operations (as well as some history, and highlights of current work) will provide useful reference information for some time to come. Contributions are also included from universities, research organizations, and engineering companies, so that the full spectrum of pyrometallurgical activities can be covered. The plant descriptions will be published on a website, where they can be updated as and when required, with the eventual goal of having a description of every smelter in the region.

The conference venue was selected to be the 'Cradle of Humankind' world heritage area, about 40 km from Johannesburg. Not only does this keep the conference within easy reach of the city and yet far enough out into the countryside to allow people to focus on the conference, it is also within easy reach of many pyrometallurgical plants. There is a particular significance to the choice of location, in that the Swartkrans area close to the Sterkfontein Caves is the site of the earliest evidence of the deliberate controlled use of fire by human beings (about 1.3 million years ago), and this is obviously a necessary precursor to pyrometallurgy. The area also lends itself to a very wide range of outdoor, social, and cultural activities to supplement the technical content of the programme. It is hoped that activities such as a hot air balloon safari and visits to the world-renowned Sterkfontein Caves and Wonder Cave will help to make the conference a memorable one for those able to attend. I trust that the ongoing value of the papers and presentations will make all the hard work of the many contributors most worthwhile.

Rodney Jones

Convenor

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