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FIRST PHASE ARCHAEOLOGICAL & HERITAGE ASSESSMENT OF THE HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS AT MELKSTROOM 563, UPINGTON, NORTHERN CAPE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A new low cost housing development consisting of about 200 stands is proposed for Portion 5 of Melkstroom 563 near Upington, Northern Cape.

Archaeological material occurred in the form of a small scatter of worked stone flakes and core flakes concentrated in specific areas away from the river. The finds were made from lithic sources of chert and agate. No actual tools occurred and the flakes can only be identified as Later Stone Age. These finds appear as a general occurrence over a small part of the area and are considered as of minor significance.

No other cultural or historical remains were found in the proposed area of development.

A cluster of about twenty-five human graves was found between the eastern border fence and the water pipeline. Most of the graves are vague and seem to be very old.

Caution is needed to avoid damage to the graves or any human skeletal remains that could be found.

I recommend that the planning and development of the site may proceed, provided that the graves should be protected.

Mitigation measures will be needed in case of the human graves.

INTRODUCTION & DESCRIPTION

Scope and Limitations

The investigation provided an opportunity to examine the site proposed for housing developments. The area contains a short grass cover on a surface varying from red sandy soil, calcrete and alluvial sand near the river. No limitations were experienced during site visit.

Methodology

Standard archaeological survey and recording methods were applied.

1. The site was inspected on foot.
2. GPS points were taken and the surroundings and features were recorded on camera.

INVESTIGATION

New housing developments are proposed for Portion 5 of Melkstroom 563 outside Upington, Northern Cape.

The site was visited on 5 July 2011. Dr Johan du Preez and Marguerite Cronjé from MDA Environmental Consultants, Bloemfontein, accompanied me and Mr Vivien McPherson from Stabilis Developments, Upington, took us to the site.

The area was examined for possible archaeological and historical material and to establish the potential impact on any cultural material that might be found. The Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) is done in terms of the National Heritage Resources Act (NHRA), (25 of 1999) and under the Environmental Conservation Act, (73 of 1989).

The study aims to locate and evaluate the significance of cultural heritage sites, archaeological material, manmade structures older than 60 years, and sites associated with oral histories and graves that might be affected by the proposed developments.

LOCALITY

The farm Melkstroom 563 is situated about 9km east of Upington along the N14 main road to Olifantshoek (Map 1&2).

The following GPS coordinates (Cape scale) were taken (Map 3) (2821).

C	28°25'16"S. 021°19'49"E Altitude 792m (Fig.1).
V	28°25'13"S. 021°19'49"E Altitude 791m (Figs.2&3).
CK	28°25'13"S. 021°19'49"E Altitude 787m (Figs.4&5).
F	28°25'23"S. 021°19'35"E Altitude 788m (Figs.6&7).
Z	28°25'04"S. 021°19'47"E Altitude 802m.
A	28°24'49"S. 021°19'39"E Altitude 813m (Figs.10& 12).
B	28°24'41"S. 021°19'47"E Altitude 814m (Figs.13& 14).
Y	28°24'35"S. 021°19'55"E Altitude 812m (Figs.15& 16).
G	28°25'01"S. 021°19'50"E Altitude 815m (Figs.18- 23).

The area has a sterile red sandy soil cover (Fig.12) with calcrete outcrops here and there (Fig.17). The surface is grass covered with scatters of shrubs (Fig.16) and a few Kameeldoring (*Erioloba*) Trees (Fig.7).

RESULTS

FINDS

The soil surface has severely been damaged by agricultural activities (Figs.2&3) and informal housings has taken over a substantial part of the land (Figs.11&12).

Archaeological material occurred in the form of small scatters of worked stone flakes, concentrated in specific area near Point Z (Figs.8&9). The artefacts were made from lithic sources of chert and agate, which had probably been imported from the riverbed. No actual tools occurred and the flakes can only be identified as Later Stone Age material.

A cluster of about twenty-five human graves (Figs.18-23) was found between the eastern border fence and the pipeline (Map 2). Most of the graves are grass-covered and unmarked and seem to be very old (Fig.22). Others, which appear to be younger, are clearly from more recent times (Figs.19&20).

IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The stone flakes described above appear as a general occurrence over most of the area near the road. These finds are considered of minor significance.

The new housing developments will have no major impact on the archaeological or cultural remains at the site.

The cluster of graves should be avoided during the layout of the township. There is always the possibility that more graves may be found during excavations and building process. In this case, caution is needed to avoid damage to any human skeletal remains that could be found.

RECOMMENDATIONS

There are no obvious reasons to delay further planning of the developments at the specific site.

I recommend that the planning of the proposed developments may proceed.

MITIGATION

Mitigation measures will only be required in case of the grave cluster and the discovery of more human skeletal remains.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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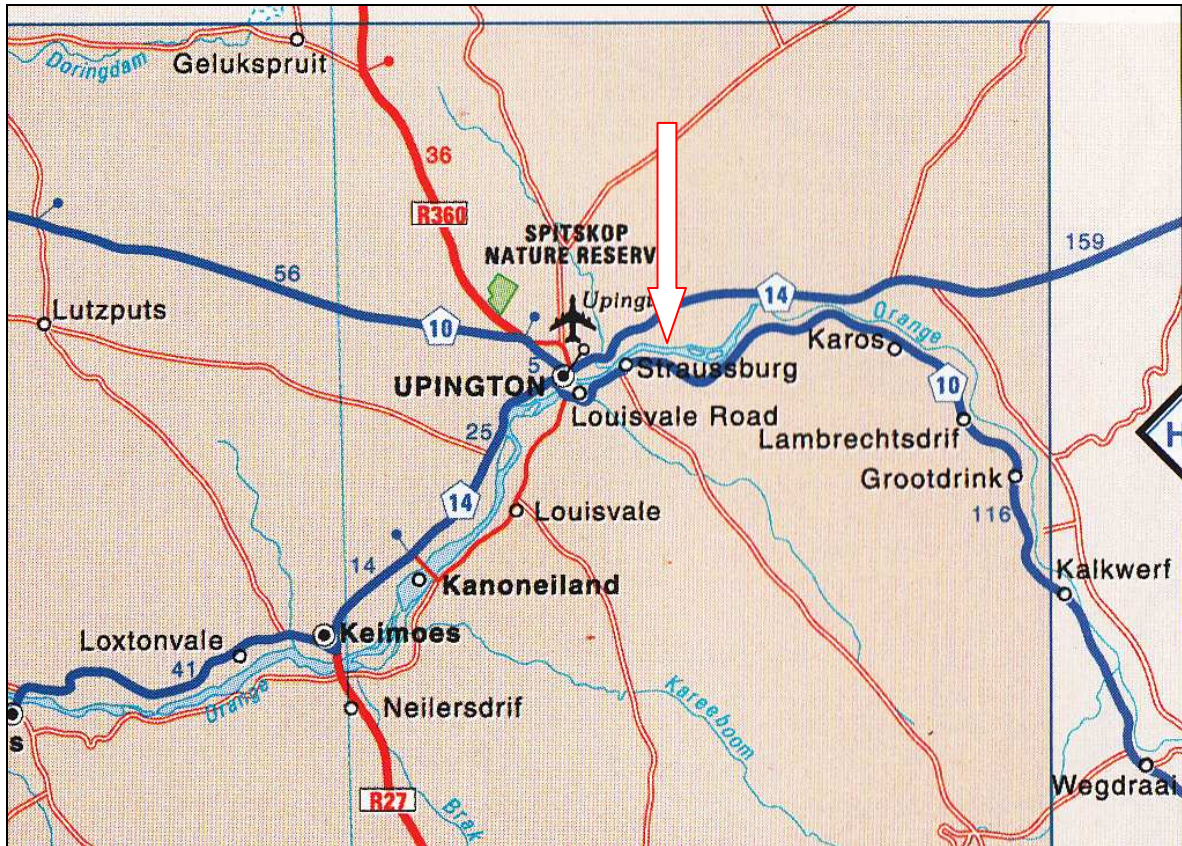
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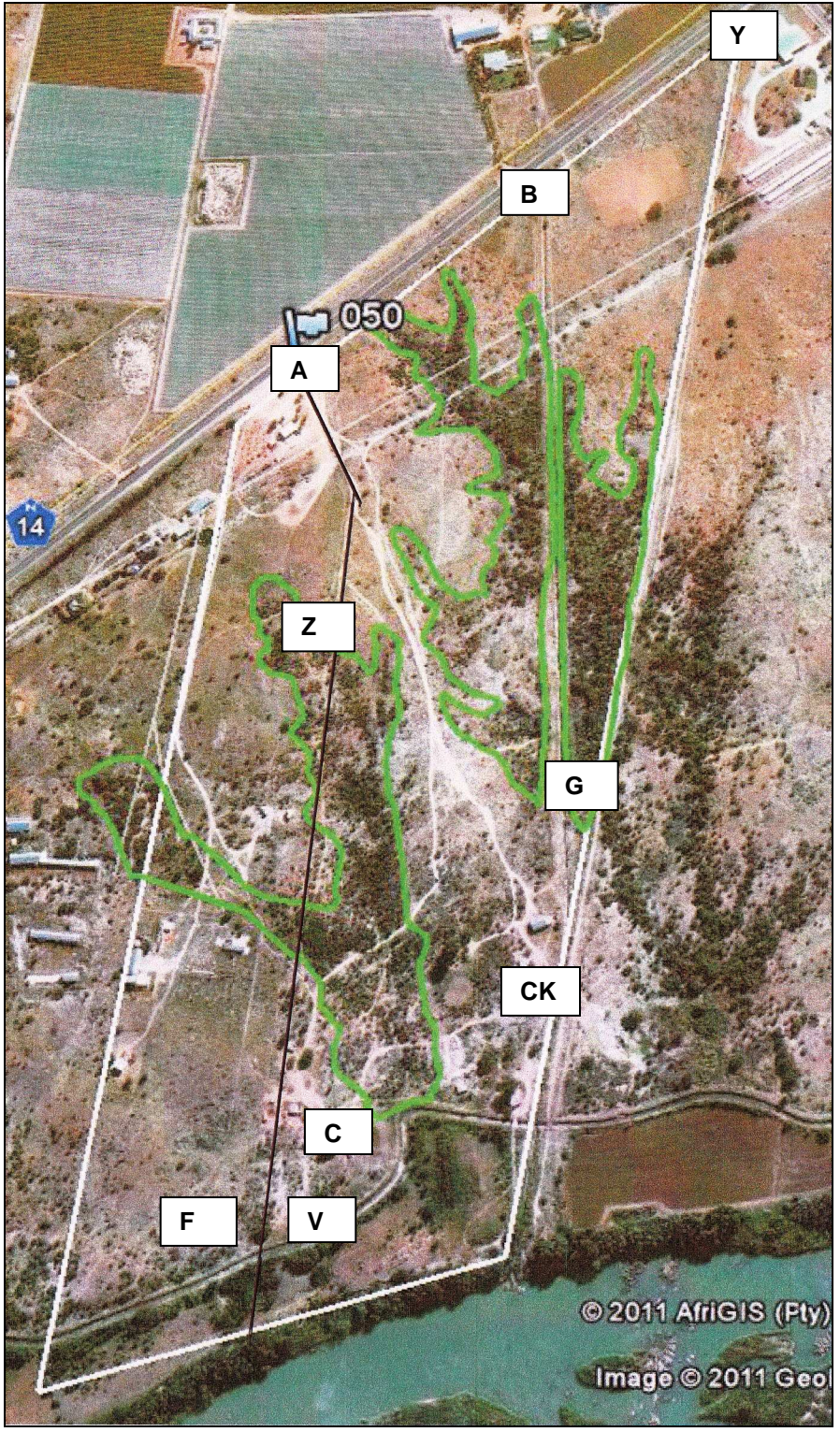
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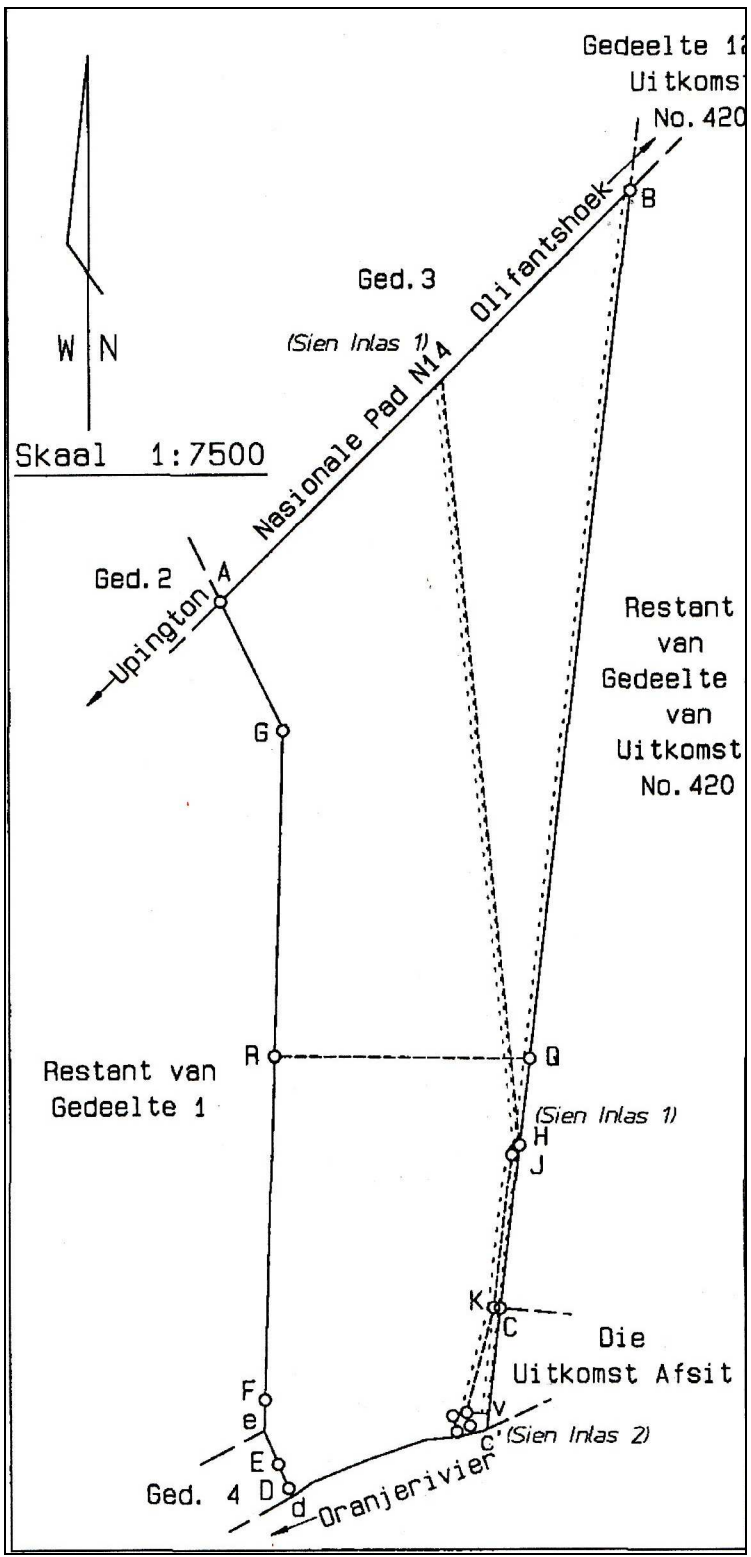
Map 1 Upington and other towns along the Orange River. Note locality of the site.



Fig.1 Point C at Melkstroom 563, Upington.



Map 2 Locality of Melkstroom, Upington (2821). Position of GPS coordinates indicated.



Map 3 Locality of the proposed development at Melkstroom, Upington (2821).



Fig.2 Point V at Melkstroom 563, Upington.



Fig.3 Point V at Melkstroom 563, Upington.



Fig.4 Point CK at Melkstroom 563, Upington.



Fig.5. Point CK at Melkstroom 563, Upington.



Fig.6 Point F at Melkstroom 563, Upington.



Fig.7 Kameel Doring Tree (*Erioloba*) at Point F at Melkstroom 563, Upington.



Fig.8 Stone flakes at Point Z, Melkstroom 563, Uppington (Pocketknife = 84mm).



Fig.9 Stone flakes at Point Z, Melkstroom 563, Uppington (Pocketknife = 84mm).



Fig.10 Entrance from the N14 at Point A, Melkstroom 563, Uppington.



Fig.11 Informal housing at Point A, Melkstroom 563, Uppington.



Fig.12 Point A. Facing towards the river at Melkstroom 563, Upington.



Fig.13 Point B, Melkstroom 563, Upington.



Fig.14 Point B, Melkstroom 563, Upington.



Fig.15 Point Y, Melkstroom 563, Upington.



Fig.16 Point Y, Melkstroom 563, Upington.



Fig.17 Calcrete on the surface at Point Z, Melkstroom 563, Upington.



Fig.18 A cluster of human graves at Point G, Melkstroom 563, Upington.



Fig.19 Grave of Lorein Van Wyk at Point G, Melkstroom 563, Upington.



Fig.20 Grave of JP Olyn at Point G, Melkstroom 563, Upington.



Fig.21 Unnamed grave at Point G, Melkstroom 563, Upington.



Fig.22 Heap of soil on a grave at Point G, Melkstroom 563, Upington.



Fig.23 Wooden marker on a grave at Point G, Melkstroom 563, Upington.