

**PHASE 1 HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT REPORT ON A PART  
OF THE REMAINDER OF PORTION 1 OF THE FARM VAN ZOELLEN'S  
LAAGTE 158, FLANKING THE VAAL RIVER DOWNSTREAM OF  
WINDSORTON, FRANCES BAARD DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY,  
NORTHERN CAPE PROVINCE.**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this study was to establish if any heritage sites were present on a portion of the Remainder of Portion 1 of the farm Van Zoelen's Laagte 158, that flanks the north bank of the Vaal River some 5 km downstream of Windsorton, in the Frances Baard District Municipality of the Northern Cape. A 1,5 hour – long foot survey of the 13 ha involved on the morning of Thursday 6 September 2007 produced six undiagnostic stone artefacts, four from disturbed contexts, and one from the modern surface, but nowhere did I see any archaeological sites, palaeontological bones or graves of any age. It is consequently considered that this small farm portion has no heritage significance and that its proposed subdivision and rezoning for residential purposes will have no impact on the heritage resources of the Northern Cape.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

According to the landowner, Mr M van der Westhuizen, a long – time resident of Windsorton, the last remaining diamond diggers along the river there are due to cease operations within the next year, thereby bringing over a century of such activities to an end. I had hoped that the *in situ* sediments below the tarred R372 to Windsorton Road would be spared, to serve as a record, however meagre, of the Riverview Estate succession, but driving to our destination, I noticed a parallel dirt road being constructed. Enquiries confirmed that the intention is to mine away the R372 and what lies below it, thereby destroying the last piece of this million year – long heritage just as new dating techniques make its precise dating feasible.

This study relates to a proposed subdivision and rezoning application that is being undertaken by MLM van der Molten CC, acting on behalf of Mr M van der Westhuizen.

## **LOCAL ARCHAEOLOGY**

The many recorded sites near Windsorton, particularly from the Riverview Estates area (e.g. Söhngé *et al.* 1937) are now largely represented by a few smallish Fauresmith – Acheulean collections housed at the University of the Witwatersrand and the McGregor Museum.

A magnificent ~13 m deep sequence on the nearby farm Sonskyn was reported on 10 July 2007 to SAHRA, when a Phase 2 collection was urged, but Mr van der Westhuizen told me that that pit has since been rehabilitated, thus making further work there far more problematical.

## **PROPERTY DESCRIPTION**

The 13 ha area that was examined flanks the north bank of the Vaal River, about 5 km south of Windsorton, in the Frances Baard District Municipality of the Northern Cape (Fig. 1). It is proposed to subdivide it into 49 erven of ~25 x 100 m in extent

that lie in abutting strips set well above the 1:50 year flood — line, taken to be at 5 m (Fig. 2). The upslope portion of these even is fairly flat and sparsely coated by vegetation (Fig. 3), whereas the slope down to the river is steepish, with a dense cover of indigenous riverine trees (Fig. 4). About 1.5 hours was spent walking over the proposed development on the morning of Thursday 6 September 2007, in the company of Mr van der Westhuizen, Michelle van der Molen and Henk Janse van Rensburg.

## **SUPERFICIAL GEOLOGY**

The flat upslope portions of the 13 ha area was seen in rim sections to be a beige overbank silt terrace, that probably corresponds with remnants of similar height above the river at Priel 6 (Beaumont 1999). At this latter occurrence the silts are underlain by Middle Faresmith and overlain by Pietersburg material, which suggests a MIS 11 age at ~400 kyr ago, in terms of the Wonderwerk timescale (Beaumont & Vogel 2006). A shallow pit near ruined buildings that correspond in location with the old Lauraville homestead (Fig. 1), showed that the silt there rests on a thin (0 – 5 cm) rubble lying directly on Karoo shale. Further west, the silt terrace surface, at ~15 m above the river level, is dissected by a gully, in which was seen an exposure of Dwyka tillite, sloping steeply down on andesite bedrock. A related observation was made a decade ago, while recording Rietput sections north of the R372 on Riverview Estates (Beaumont 1999), when andesite bedrock was seen to be stratified. What those findings suggest is that the present Vaal valley in this area was shaped prior to Dwyka times, ~300 million years ago, and was then buried by about a km of Karoo sediments, that have since been almost entirely stripped away. It is therefore a resurrected landform, with the many andesite clasts dumped and flushed into it during the final erosion of the Dwyka sediments, rather than fluvial action, being the major basis of the so – called Younger Gravels.

## **HERITAGE FINDINGS**

Disturbed contexts produced five artefacts, three flakes and two cores (Fig. 5), that are fairly fresh, based on quartzite, banded ironstone, and chert, that derive from the

rubble below the silts, and are thus likely to be of Acheulean age, whereas a small core with a single removal (Fig. 5), from the modern surface, could refer to the LSA. Nowhere did I see any archaeological sites, palaeontological bones, or graves of any age.

## CONCLUSIONS

The examined 13 ha area yielded no significant heritage finds, and my conclusion is thus that its proposed development, for residential purposes, will have no impact on the heritage resources of the Northern Cape.

## REFERENCES

- Beaumont P.B. (1999). *INQUA XV Int. Conf. Field Guide: Northern Cape*. Institute of Geosciences, Pretoria.
- Beaumont, P.B. & Vogel, J.C. 2006. On a timescale for the past million years of human history in central South Africa. *S. Afr. J. Sci.* **102**, 217 - 228.
- Söhnge P.G., Visser D.J.L. and van Riet Lowe C. (1937). The geology and archaeology of the Vaal River basin. *S. Afr. Geol. Survey Memos*, **35** (1 & 2), 1 - 134.

## NOTES

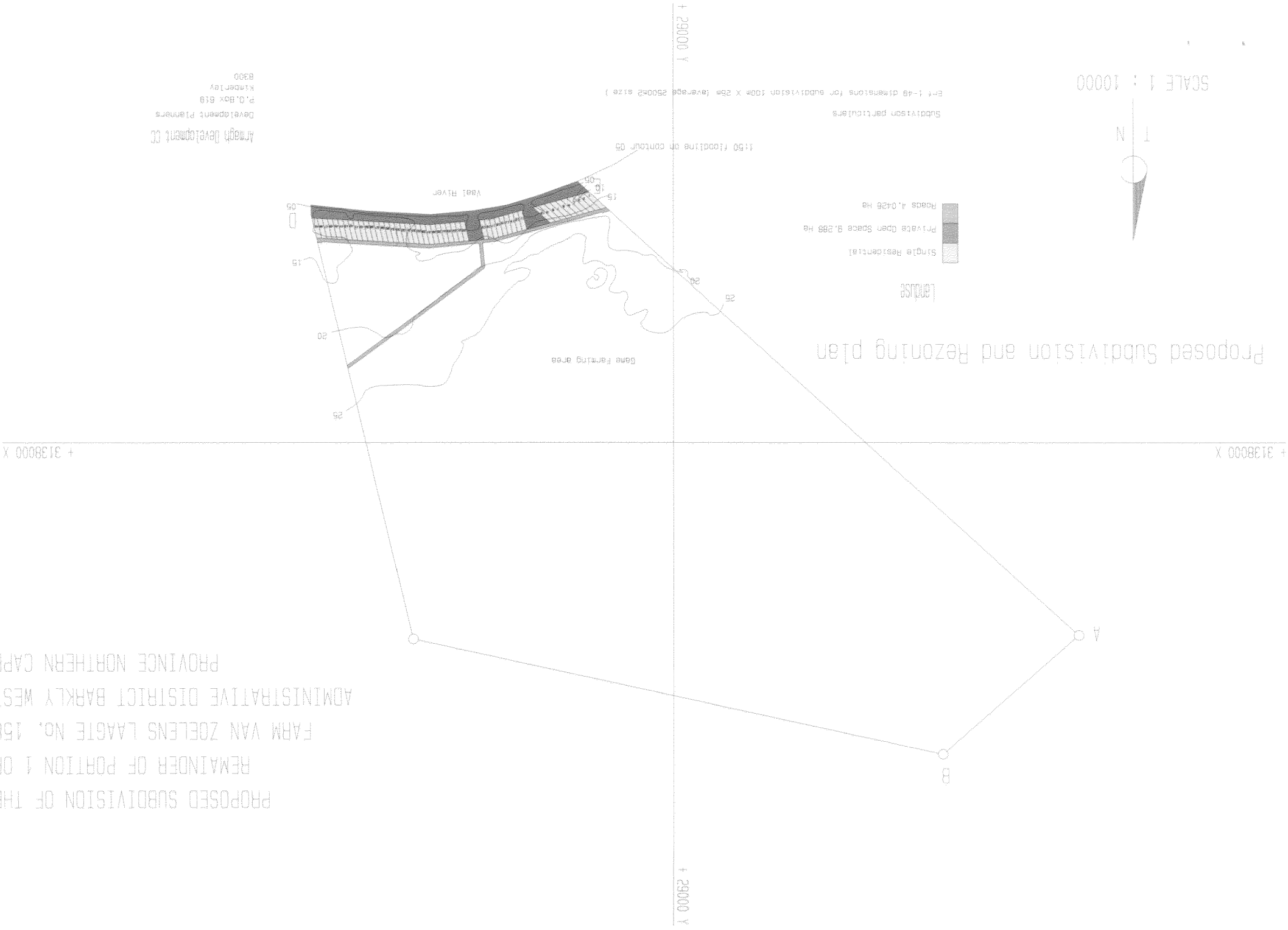
- A copy of the locality map and all appended Figures must accompany this report to SAHRA.
- Applications to SAHRA will not be processed unless accompanied by payment of R150 per application. SAHRA banking details are: ABSA, Branch Code: 312109; Current Account no.: 360 680 606.





PROPOSED SUBDIVISION OF THE  
 REMAINDER OF PORTION 4 OF  
 FARM VAN ZOELENS LAAGTE NO. 158  
 ADMINISTRATIVE DISTRICT BARKLY WEST  
 PROVINCE NORTHERN CAPE

+ 313800 X



SCALE 1 : 10000



Subdivision particulars  
 Ent 1-49 dimensions for subdivision 100m X 25m (average 2500m<sup>2</sup> size)

Armagh Development CC  
 Development Planners  
 P.O. Box 519  
 Kimberley  
 8300



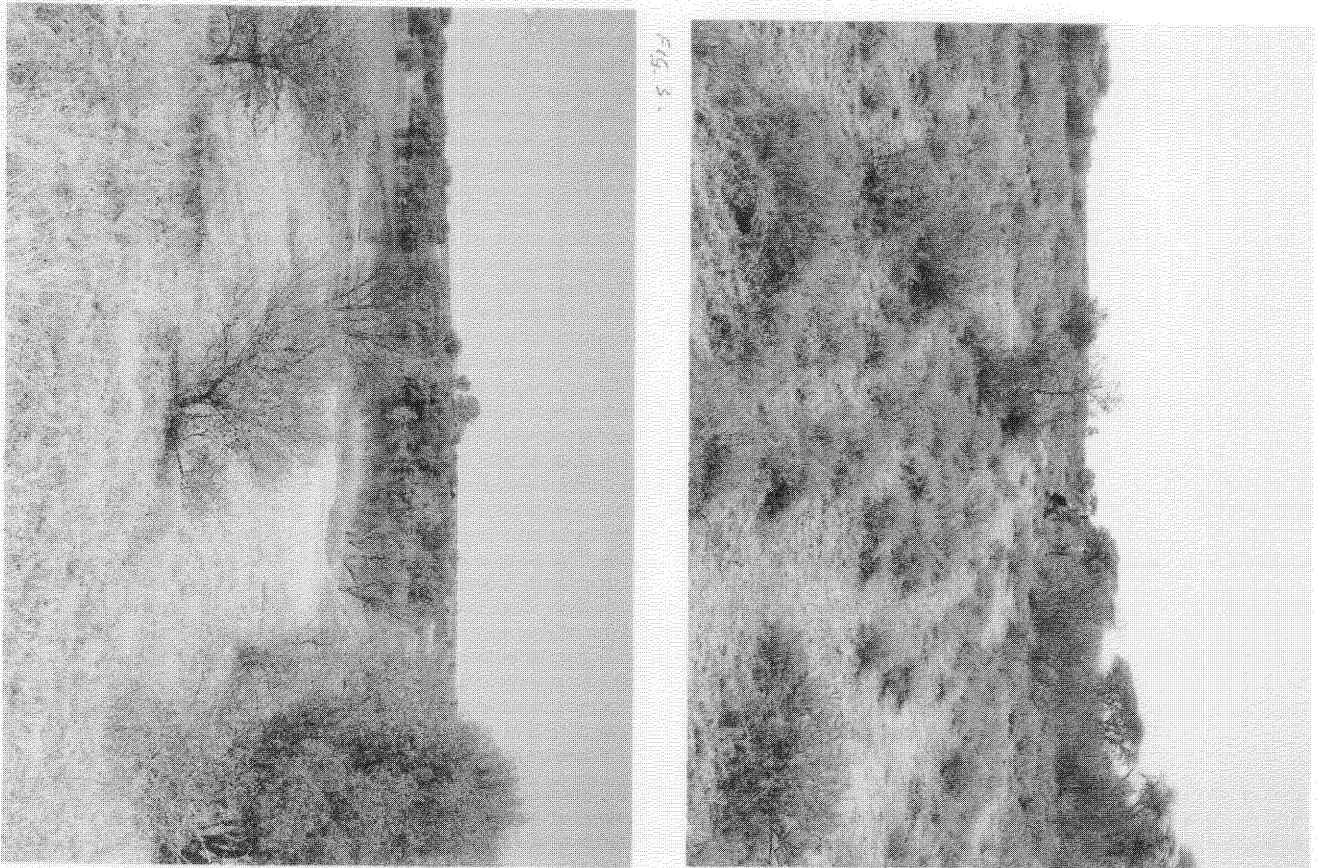


FIG. 3.

FIG. 4.

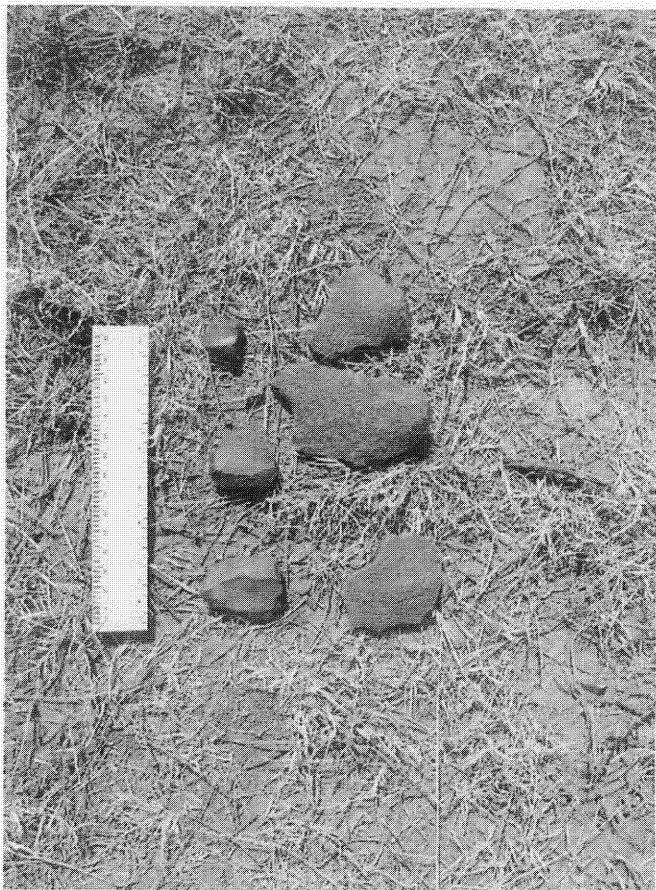


FIG. 5