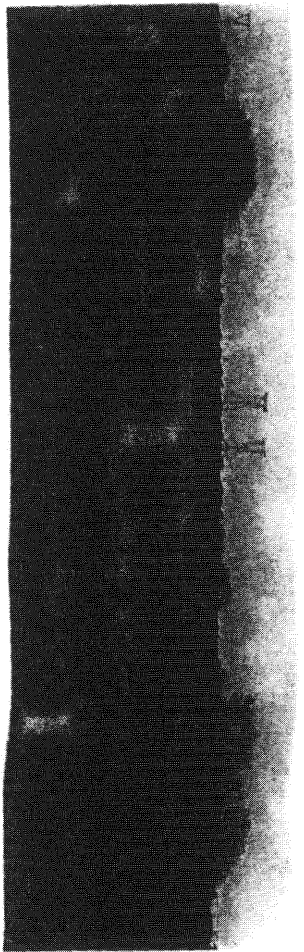


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ARCHAEOLOGICAL SPECIALIST REPORT
ASSESSMENT OF POSSIBLE IMPACTS OF
PROPOSED MINING AT PNIEL,
BARKLY WEST DISTRICT,
NORTHERN CAPE



Prepared for

African Water Solutions CC
and
Intuthuko Mining

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November 2000

**Report on possible archaeological impacts
of proposed mining by Intuthuko Mining
at Pniel, Barkly West District,
Northern Cape**

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Introduction

The author was approached to inspect proposed mining areas at Pniel, Barkly West District, Northern Cape, as a contribution to an EMPR for Intuthuko Mining (Pty) Ltd. Various sites were examined on 6 November 2000, and the following observations were made.

Pniel has a wealth of archaeological and historical sites (eg. Beaumont & Morris 1990) that are incompletely documented. Higher densities of sites tend to occur along the river and on the margins of pans than in areas away from these features (Beaumont & Morris 1990; compare Verster 1998).

Proposed mining area

The area where mining is planned is on a pre-Karoo platform of Ventersdorp lava which is overlain by diamond-bearing Older Gravels, in turn under a mantle of Hutton sands.

Areas already worked by Intuthuko afforded opportunities to inspect below surface archaeological material. Observations were made at the following locales: 28.36.14 S 24.24.32 E; 28.35.15 S 24.23.47 E; 28.34.42 S 24.21.02 E (GPS).

It was found that sporadic archaeological material does occur over this area in the form of quartzite flakes (Fig. 1) that are ascribable to the Fauresmith techno complex (Beaumont 1999). This was very similar to assemblages recovered from a closely analogous setting on the nearby farm of Nooitgedacht.

Such material is likely to be found over much of the area of proposed mining. But densities of artefacts here appear to be far lower than at, for instance, Nooitgedacht, and the expected negative impact here of mining on this material - on a regional scale - could not be said to be significant.

It should be noted, however, that some more recent, eg. Later Stone Age, material may well occur in or on the Hutton sands; and that these kinds of settings are also known to have been used for human burials (a burial was found in Hutton sands on De Hoop, near Nooitgedacht - see Miller *et al.* 1993); as also for the placement of ostrich eggshell water flask caches (one of which - containing 15 flasks - was excavated in the adjoining Vaalbos Park - see Morris 1994).

Further, it is possible that rock engravings could be found on some of the Ventersdorp andesite which outcrops at many places across the proposed mining area.

Route of proposed water pipeline

The vicinity of the proposed route for a water supply pipe was checked and was found to be sensitive in terms of cf. late nineteenth century diamond diggers' settlements (Fig. 2). Two complexes of stone walled structures and dwelling units were located at (Site 1) 28.35.53 S 24.26.02 E and (Site 2) 28.36.13 S 24.25.58 E (GPS) respectively. At site 1 a refuse midden was located at the foot of one of the walls, with good bone preservation (Figs. 3 & 4). Glass and porcelain fragments were found, as also a part of a mouth organ (Fig. 5) (which, culturally, may suggest Free State farmer-digger - F.M. Barbour pers comm). Site 2 was equally interesting (Fig. 6), with clearly distinguishable areas of diamond sorting and domestic spaces (glass, porcelain), together with diverse forms of stone walling and structures. Further mouth organ pieces were found in this area (A. du Toit pers comm).

Also found at Site 2 was a button with the inscription "J. Solomon - Kimberley" upon it (Fig. 7). This certainly dates from after July 1874 (when New Rush was renamed Kimberley), while archival research should help to establish a more definite maximum possible age and an upper dating limit for the manufacture of the button. In the interim it can be noted that *Turner's Griqualand West Directory and Guide to the Diamond Fields* of 1885 shows that there was then a "John Solomon, Kafir Store, North Circular Road". In 1901 this same concern was apparently operating as "Solomon, Mrs J., General Dealer, 2 North Circular Road", according to the *Kimberley Street Directory* for that year, while by 1906 it was no longer in existence. A general dealer may well have had its buttons imprinted. Another candidate is J. Solomon, Tailor, of 5 Selby Street in 1901, and subsequently of 34 South Circular Road. It may be a little less likely that a tailor would have had his buttons imprinted in this way.

Recommendations

1. Proposed mining area

The archaeological impacts of mining in the areas indicated to the author are not expected to be great. There is a low density of Pleistocene Stone Age material similar to that found on the platform above Nooitgedacht, at which latter place, however, the density of artefacts is much higher.

But there is a possibility of encountering precolonial burials in the overlying sand (these are not always marked by surface cairns); as also ostrich eggshell caches.

Mining personnel should be alerted to these possibilities and the legal requirements should any such sites be encountered (i.e. halting work and seeking assessment by an archaeologist and for possible mitigation measures). The National Heritage Act of 1999 has reference.

Additionally, some of the andesite outcrops may have rock engravings on them.

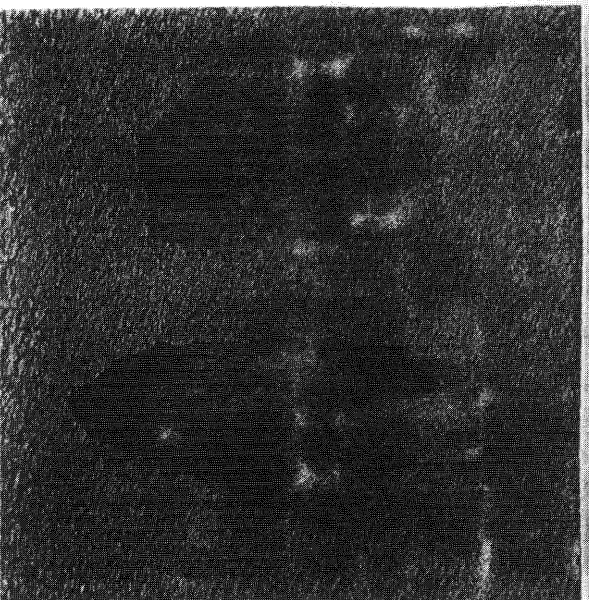


Figure 1. Quartzite flakes from an area mined by Intuhuko Mining, Priel

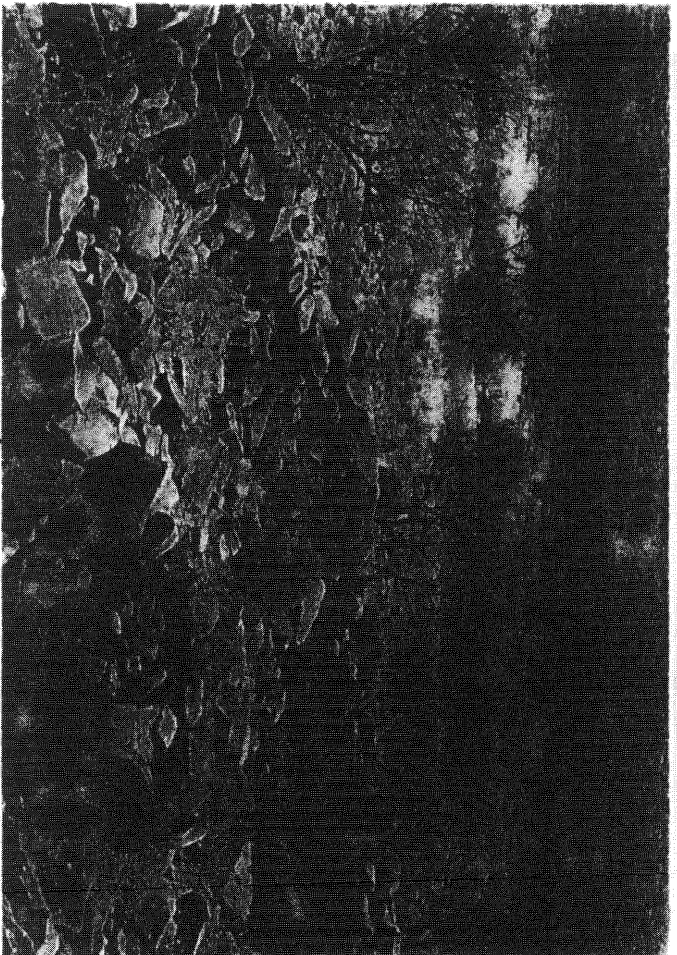
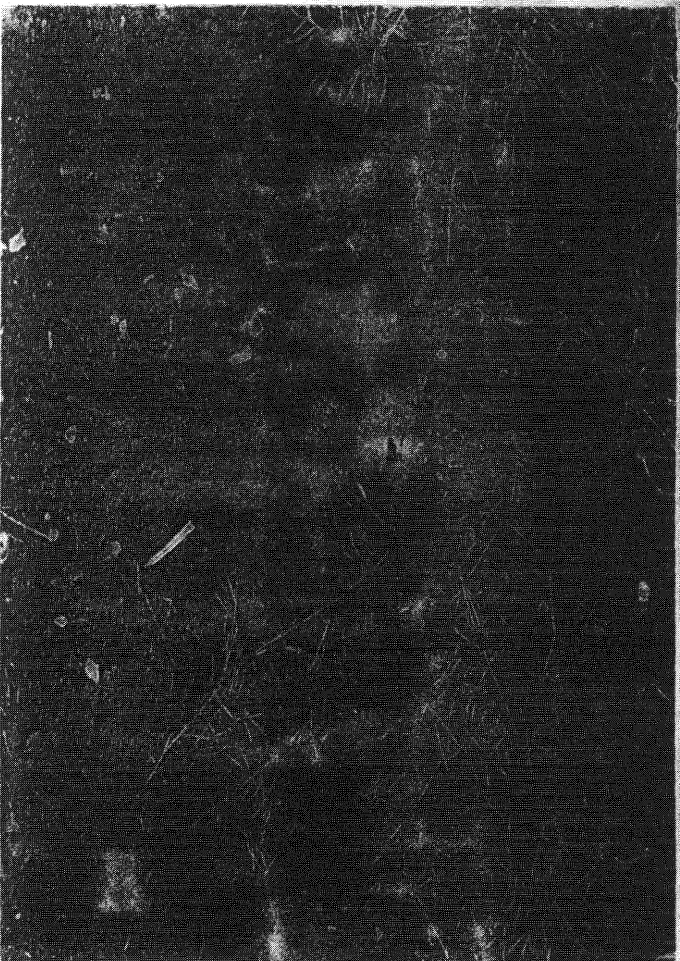


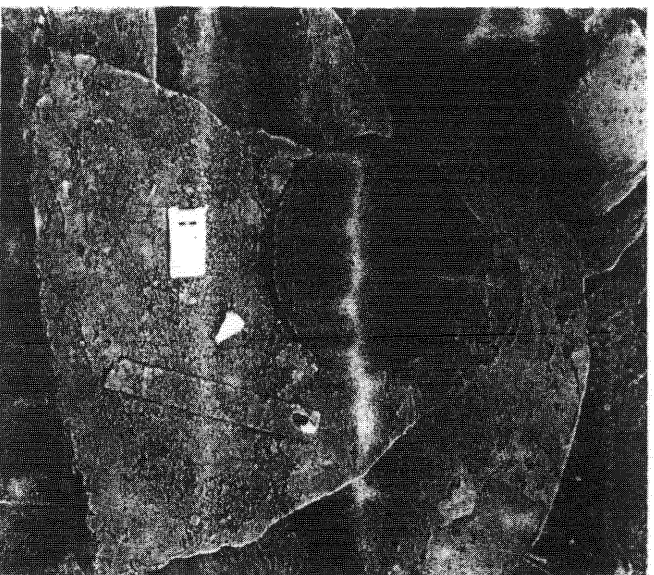
Figure 2. Stone walling at nineteenth century diamond diggers' camp, Priel



Figures 3 & 4.
Midden (top) with
ash and charcoal
nodules, together
with bone. This
midden is situated
against stone
walling near the rear
of the landrover at
Site 1 (right).



Figure 5. Part of mouth
organ, porcelain fragment
and metal objects, Site 1.



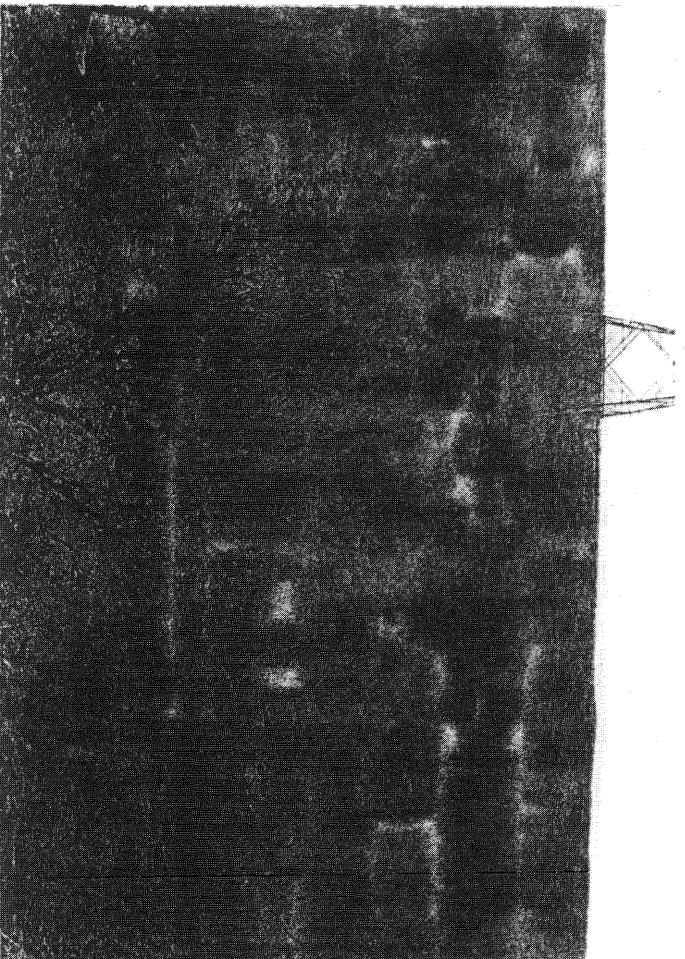


Figure 6. View of site 2. A variety of structures and activity areas discernible.

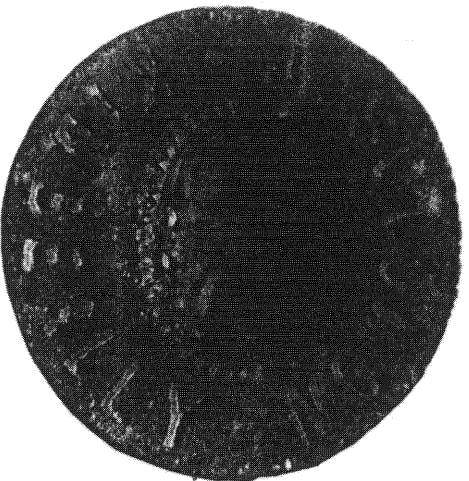


Figure 7. Button.
"J. Solomon, Kimberley"

2. Proposed water pipeline

It is recommended that, given the existence of largely undisturbed late nineteenth century diamond diggers' settlements in the vicinity of the pipeline route, great care must be taken in any upgrading of roads, as well as in the selection of a route for the pipeline and in its construction.

It is recommended that once a pipeline route has been chosen this should be checked by an archaeologist.

An effort will be made to attract a specialist/student in historical archaeology to undertake a study of the early mining camps here, which are a significant but totally under-researched facet in the archaeology and history of the region.

Acknowledgements

I thank Adriaan du Toit who took me to the sites.

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