

**PHASE 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT REPORT ON
AREAS FLANKING THE VREDESVALLEI SETTLEMENT AT
RIEMVASMAAK, NEAR KAKAMAS, SIYANDA DISTRICT
MUNICIPALITY, NORTHERN CAPE PROVINCE.**

Peter B Beaumont

c/o Archaeology Department
McGregor Museum
PO Box 316
8300 Kimberley
Tel 053 - 842 0986 or 053 - 839 2700
Fax 053 - 842 1433
e-mail se@museumsnc.co.za

CONSULTANT

Marquerite Geldenhuys

MEG Environmental Impact Studies

Tweedelaan 13
Oosterville
8801 Upington
Tel 054 - 332 2781 or 082 821 0794
Fax 054 – 332 2781
e-mail megois@intekom.co.za

20 May 2008

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this study was to determine if any archaeological or other heritage sites were present on ~130 ha of natural veld flanking the Vredesvallei village at Riemvasmaak, ~55 km north-west of Kakamas in the Siyanda District Municipality of the Northern Cape Province. A 50 ha portion lies west of the village and comprises a heavily overgrazed slope running down to silts bordering the Orange River, whereas the other 80 ha lies east of the village in a valley between hills, where the cover is less degraded, with camel thorn trees at its eastern end. A foot survey over the full extent of these two areas on Monday 12 May 2008 produced half a dozen scattered and undiagnostic stone artefacts, but nowhere did I see any archaeological sites, palaeontological bones, or structures / graves predating 60 years ago. These findings lead me to conclude that the inspected terrain has no heritage potential and that its proposed use for the cultivation of *Hoodia gordonii* by members of the local community will have no impact on the heritage resources of the Northern Cape.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

This report is part of an EIA that is being compiled by Marquerite Geldenhuys of MEG Environmental Impact Studies at the request of a Gauteng – based firm acting on behalf of Unilever. That company has decided, as a BEE initiative, to bear the costs of establishing a *Hoodia gordonii* plantation on about 130 ha of ground just east and west of Vredesvallei village. The proposed development is thus agricultural, on natural veld that the local community received by way of a land claim, and that does not involve re-zoning or subdivision. My terms of reference were to detail observations based on a field survey of the terrain and to assess the significance of heritage impacts, should the development go ahead. Such a report is required by the National Heritage Resources Act (no. 25 of 1999), which states that no development may normally take place without heritage assessment and approval.

REGIONAL ARCHAEOLOGY

In the mid- 1980's the author was invited by Northern Cape Nature Conservation to participate in a visit to Riemvasmaak, when, with two assistants, two days were spent exploring the same terrain, plus the riverside silt terrace and an area further to the west. During that time we located two Ceramic LSA sites, Bokvasmaak 3 & 4, both outside of the latterly – inspected area, of which the former was a midden with an abundance of fish bones, as also lithics, pottery and iron beads, all dated to ~120 years BP (Beaumont *et al.* 1995).

Other known sites in the region are Biesje Poort 2, about 40 km to the east, where an extensive Doornfontein occurrence is dated to ~1400 BP (Beaumont *et al.* 1995), and Renosterkop, a similar distance to the south-east, where two Ceramic LSA sites were found, the one, in a small shelter, above MSA (Morris & Beaumont 1991). This latter locality, with Zoovoorbij Cave near Keimoes (Smith 1995), are the only regional sites to have yielded stratified successions, with both indicating a MSA presence of likely early MIS 5 age, a protracted glacial hiatus, and then LSA occupations, strongly linked to water sources, during the Holocene.

PROPERTY DESCRIPTION

The area that was inspected consisted of two 50 and 80 ha portions lying immediately west and east, respectively, of the Vredesvallei settlement at Riemvasmaak, ~55 km north-west of Kakamas, in the Siyanda District Municipality of the Northern Cape (Figs. 1 - 4). The former portion is a southward sloping surface bounded to the north by an unpaved east – west road, to the south by the edge of an overbank silt terrace flanking the Orange River, to the east by the village or vineyards, and to the west by a small cemetery (Fig. 2). When seen in the 1980's, this terrace featured occasional gullies running down to the Orange River with a modest grass and bush cover between them, but extreme overgrazing by goats during the past two decades has since remodelled it into an undulating sand sheet (Figs. 5 – 8). The other portion is situated in a flat – based valley and runs from the same east – west road in the north to a range of hills in the south and from a camel thorn – covered area next to the Molopo channelway in the east to the edge of the Vredesvallei settlement in the west (Figs. 9 & 10). Monday 12 May 2008 was spent, in the company of Marquerite Geldenhuys and botanist Noel van Rooyen, walking over the full extent of both the above – mentioned areas, with geographical co-ordinates being taken, when called for, with a Garmin GPS.

SUPERFICIAL SEDIMENTS

The surface in the western area is made up of occasional low schist outcrops and the balance of unconsolidated and unstratified fine – coarse gritty beige sands that gully depths suggest are up to ~2 m in depth. Sand in the valley base portion to the east was noted to be much finer, perhaps reflecting far fewer bedrock outcrops there, and a fluvial component, as is suggested by low earth dam walls of recent vintage at two low – lying points along it that had both been breached by water. Pertinent in this regard was the finding of localized sparse veneers of angular – rounded cobbles on schist outcrops just west of the Molopo channel at 28° 30' 18.6" S, 20° 12' 55.1" E (Fig. 10), and on the eastern edge of the village, at 28° 30' 17.2" S, 20° 11' 54.2" E. These spreads included reddish quartzite and banded ironstone clasts that derive

from source areas far to the west, which must mean that these were transported from there by the Molopo at times when it occasionally or regularly flowed down the valley.

HERITAGE FINDINGS

The eastern area yielded seven undiagnostic quartzite artefacts (Figs. 11 & 12) that all came from the two above – mentioned 'gravel' occurrences, which suggests, given that the specimens are all fresh, that these prime raw material sources were occasionally used, subsequent to their deposition. On a low schist rises on the south edge of the valley, at 28° 30' 32.1" S, 20° 12' 28.1" E, there was a 5 m wide circle of quartz slabs with a gap on its north side (Fig. 13), that may represent the base of an old goat kraal, of age unknown.

My foot survey of the western area produced no artefacts, perhaps largely due to the fact that sand movement has created an entirely new surface there over the past two decades, as evidenced by the finding a pile of fairly fresh donkey / horse droppings that was largely buried. I also examined the adjacent graveyard with 50 – 60 burials, at 28° 30' 21.5" S, 20° 10' 45.9" E, and noted that it was adequately fenced and contained headstones ranging back from 2003 to 1959, with some unmarked interments that could be still older (Fig. 14).

Nowhere within the two examined areas were there any actual sites, fossil bones, or structures / graves predating 60 years ago.

CONCLUSIONS

My conclusion is therefore that the two inspected areas contain no significant heritage material and that their proposed use for *Hoodia* production by the local community will have no impact on the heritage resources of the Northern Cape Province.

REFERENCES

Morris, D & Beaumont, P. 1991. !Nawabdanas: archaeological sites at Renosterkop, Kakamas District, northern Cape. *S. Afr. Archaeol. Bull.*, **46**: 115 – 124.

Beaumont, P.B., Smith, A.B. & Vogel, J.C. 1995. Before the Einiqua: The Archaeology of the Frontier Zone. *In* A.B. Smith (ed.) *Einiqualand*, pp. 236 – 264. Rondebosch, UCT Press.

Smith, A.B. 1995. Archaeological Observations along the Orange River and its Hinterland. *In* A.B. Smith (ed.) *Einiqualand*, pp. 265 - 300. Rondebosch, UCT Press.

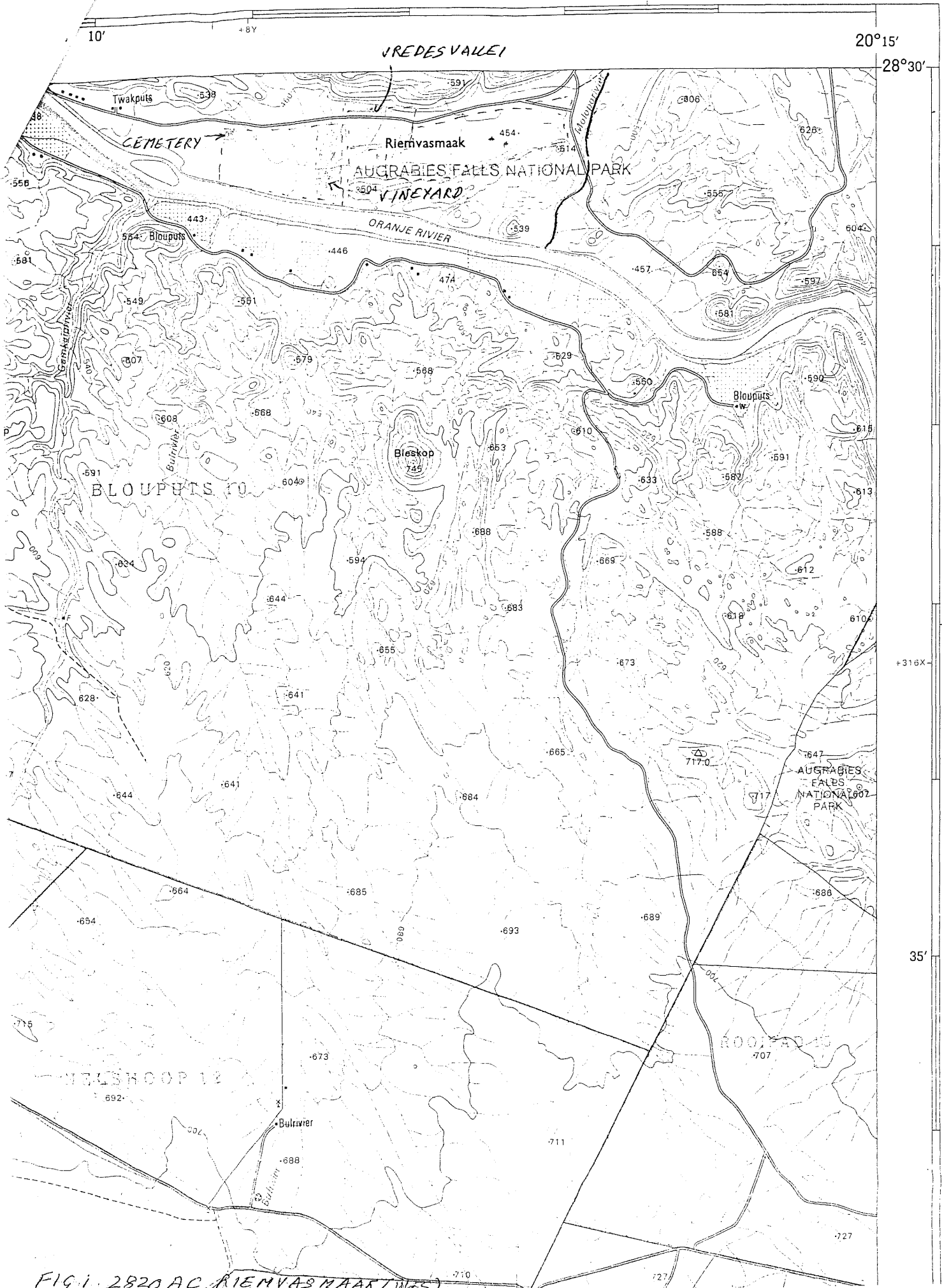
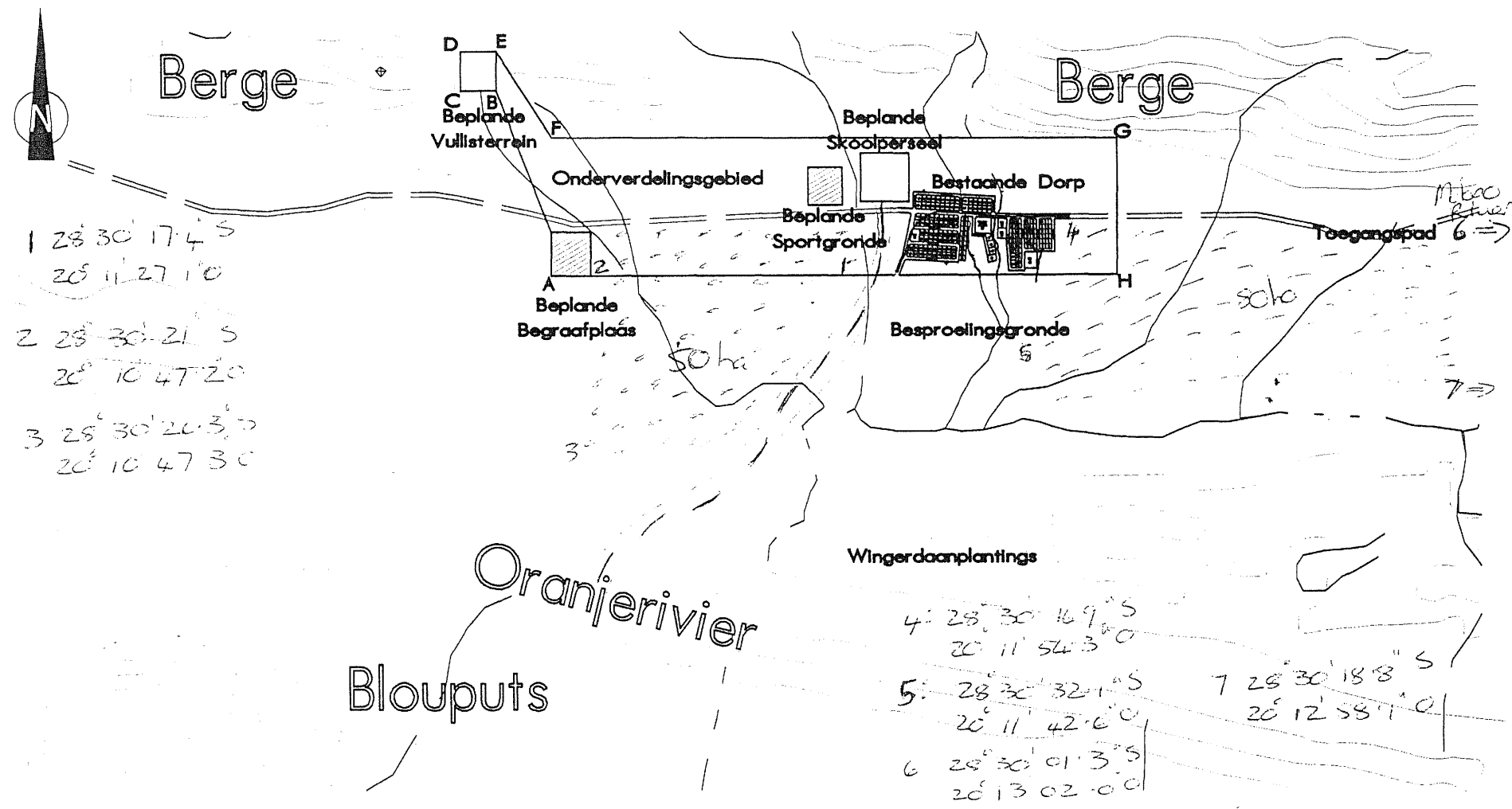


FIG. 1. 2820 AC RIEMVASMAAK (WES)

RVM.



Figuur 2

Uitlegplan van beraamde ligging

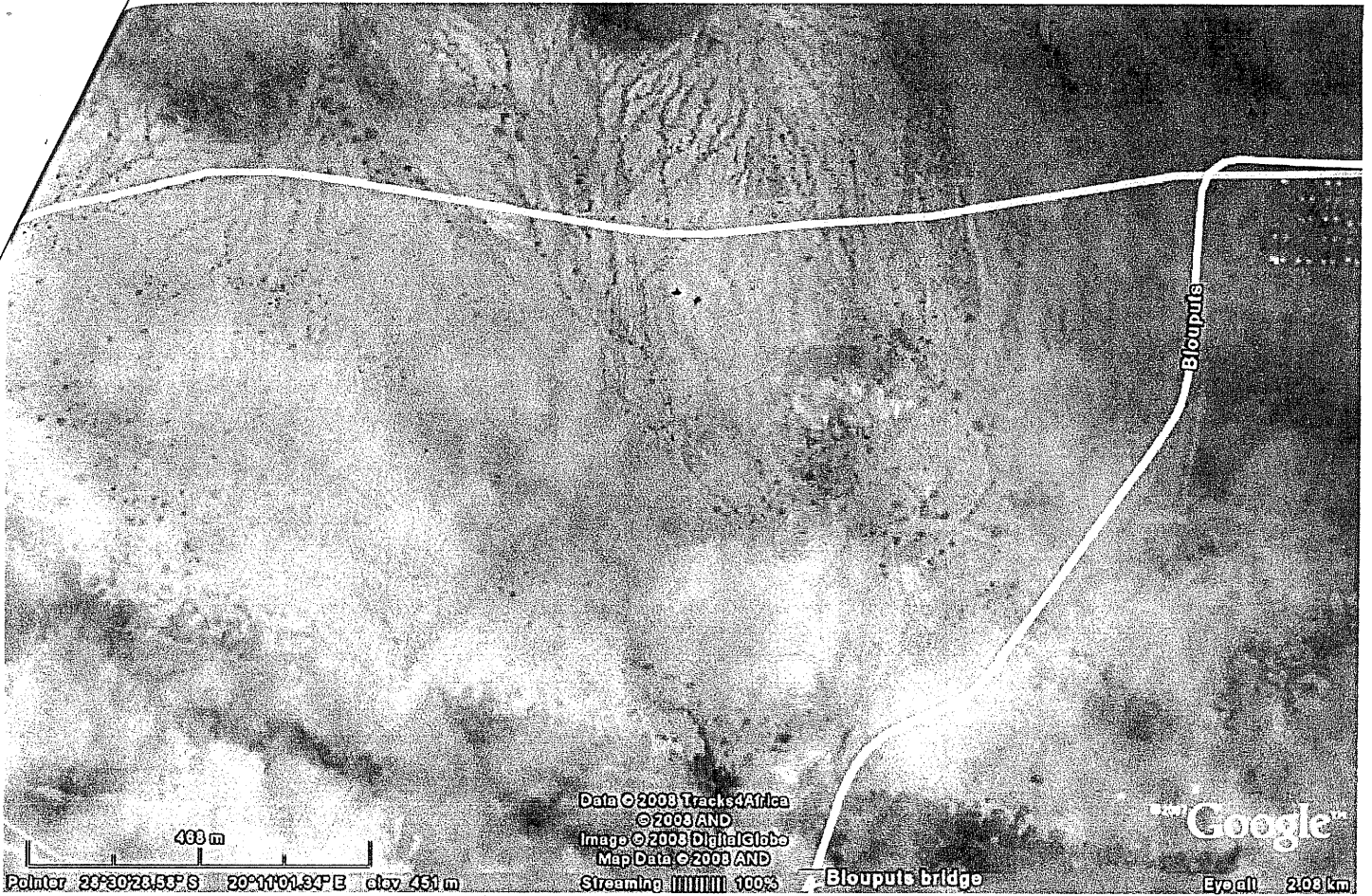
Institusioneel I

Op. Punte zone II

	1 ha
	15 ha

MACROPLAN
STADS- & STREEKBEPLANNERS
ONTWIKKELINGSEKONOME



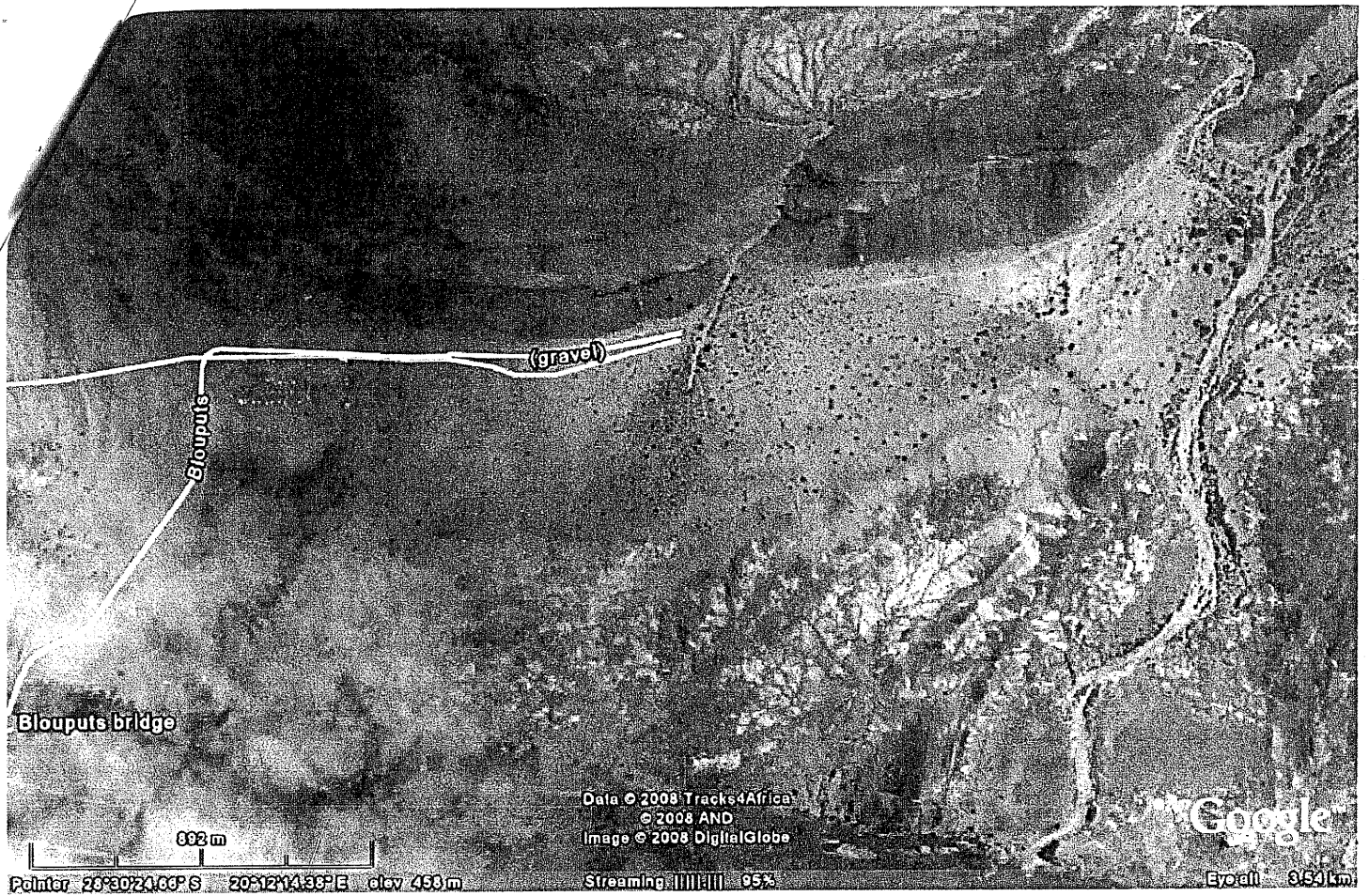


RUM hoodia

50

T

F193



R.M. Hoodia.

scha

Fig 4.

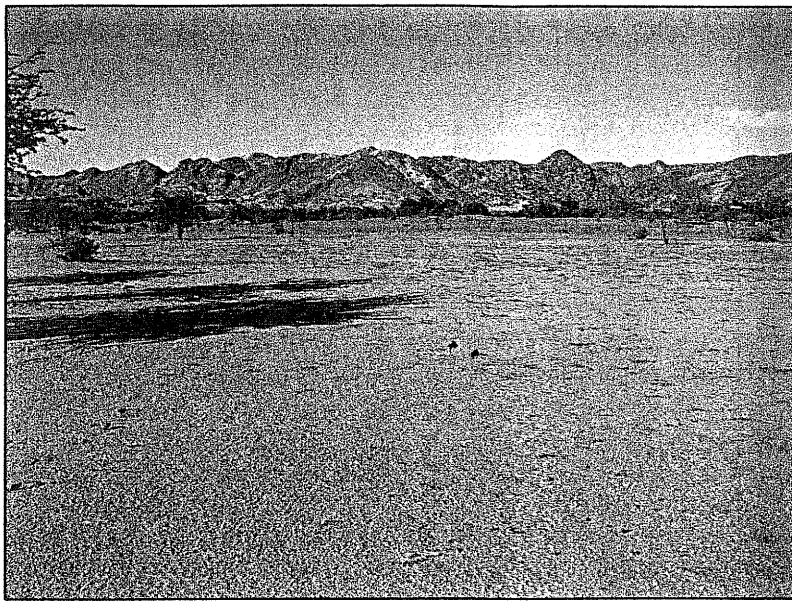


FIG 5. VIEW TO S IN WESTERN
AREA

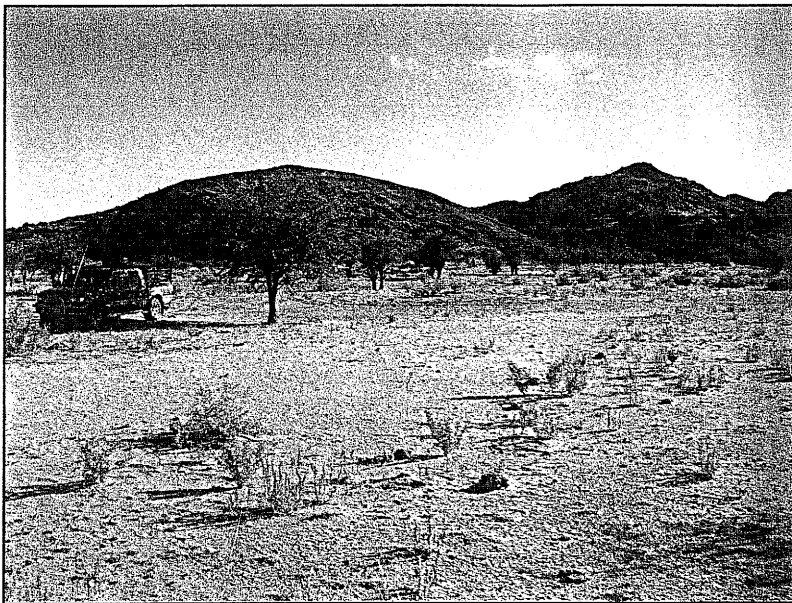


FIG 6. VIEW TO N IN WESTERN
AREA

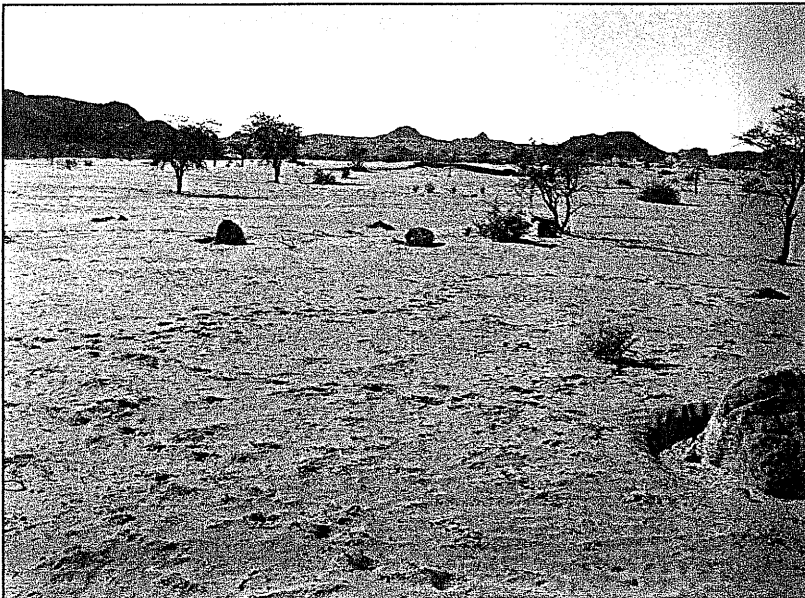


FIG 7. VIEW TO E IN WESTERN
AREA

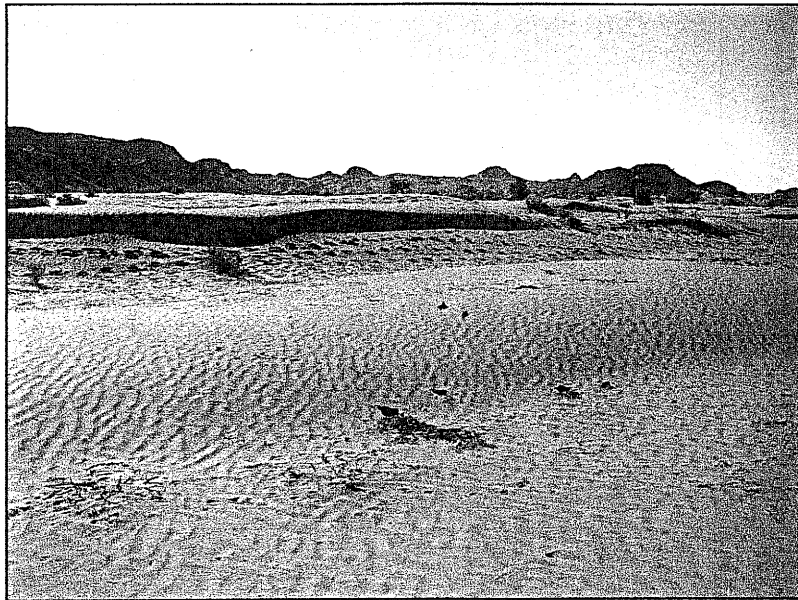


FIG 8. VIEW TO E IN WESTERN
AREA.

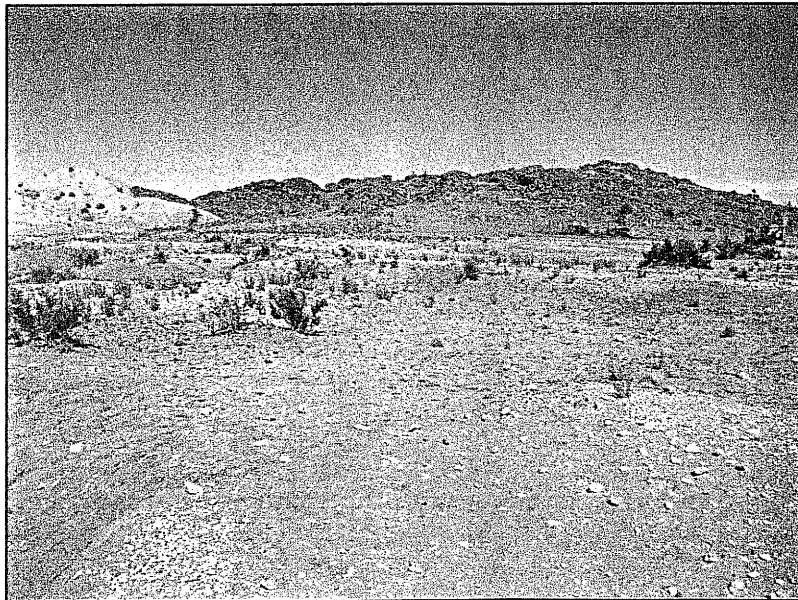


FIG 9. EASTERN AREA:
BORDERING HILLS TO S

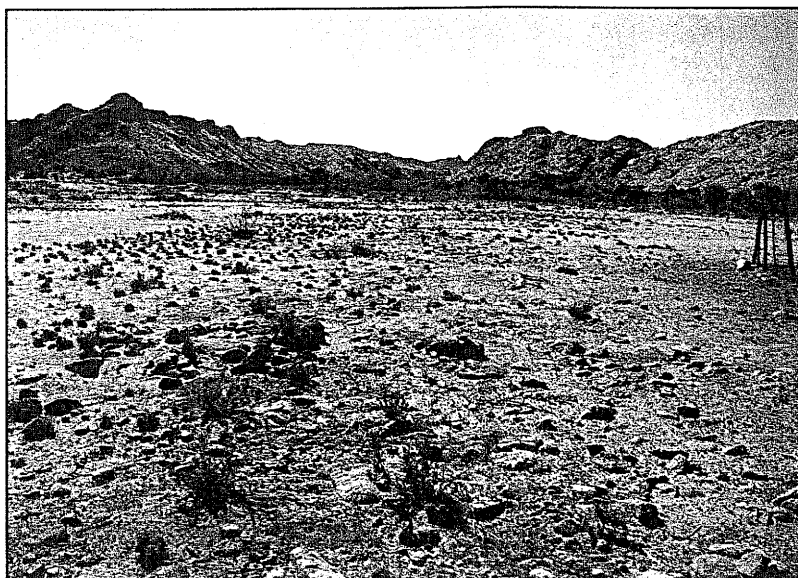


FIG 10. EASTERN AREA:
SCHIST OUTCROP WITH THIN
COVER OF RIVER COBBLES

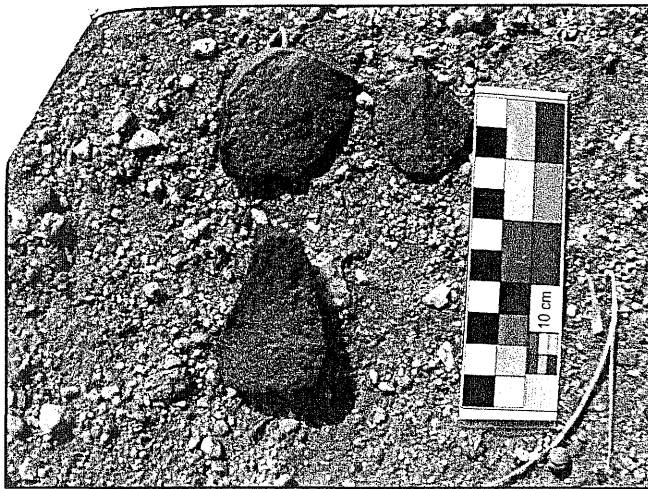


FIG 11. THREE FLAKES FROM GRAVEL SCATTER
SHOWN IN FIG 10.

FIG 12. FOUR ARTEFACTS FROM GRAVEL SURFACE
ON E SIDE OF VREDESVALLEI SETTLEMENT

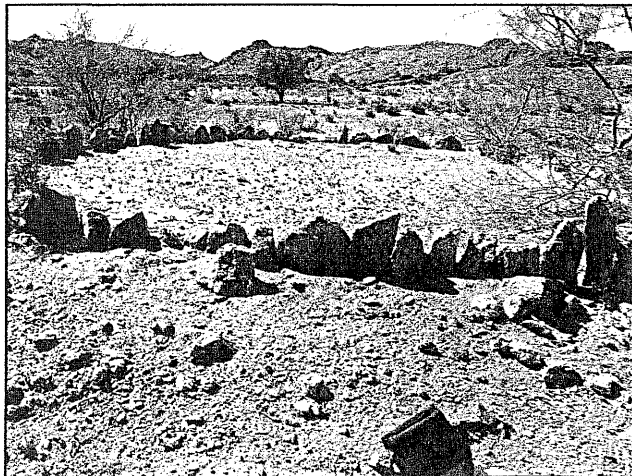
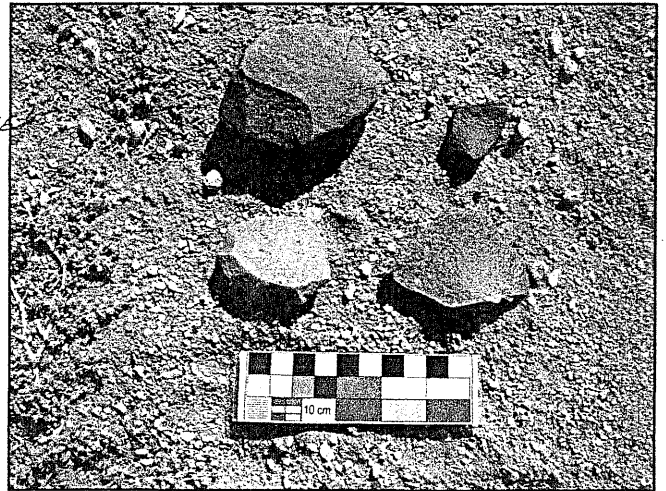


FIG 13. CIRCLE OF STONES ON S EDGE OF
EASTERN AREA

FIG 14. A 1959 GRAVE WITH HEADSTONE
SCRIPT FACING AWAY FROM INTERMENT.

