HERITAGE STUDY FOR AN EMP COVERING A PORTION OF REMAINDER OF KRANSFONTEIN 19.

On Thursday 18 February 2005 I accompanied Bez Bezuidenhout and Itumeleng Lute of Botswere Mining to the area called Remainder of Kransfonrein 19. To reach it we travelled 50 km beyond Douglas on the Douglas - Prieska road, turned north on the Paal-se-Werf road to the Kransfontein farmhouse and then along tracks leading ENE. This brought us to increasingly hilly terrain abutting on steeply incised slopes leading down northwards to the E-W flowing Orange River at 85 m further down. A foot survey of small early diggings and of the recent exploratory trench and pits of Steyn Diamante led to the following observations:

SECTION 1

A 30 m long trench transecting a spur of high ground on the eastern end of the prospecting area showed an up to 7 m thick calcified gravel lying on andesite bedrock. It was made up of three units, namely a basal 2 m of cobbles, 2 m of bedded sands with few cobbles and an upper 3 m of cobbles extending to the eroded modern surface. Clasts throughout were dominated by strongly banded banded ironstone, plus a small fraction of cobbles based on andesite, quartzite and dolerite (diabase). This exposure can be confidently ascribed to the Older Gravels, and is, on altitudinal grounds, of similar age to the 85 m high Nooitgedacht Platform near Kimberley (Butzer *et al.*, 1973). The latter is now regarded as having formed during late Cretaceous times some 65 myr ago (de Wit *et al.*, 1997), about when the dinosaurs became extinct. An examination of cobbles in the prospecting trench and on the adjacent dump contained no artefacts, nor were any pieces of fossil bone seen.

OTHER SECTIONS

Flat portions of the proposed mining area west of Section 1 were covered by dozens of small cobble piles that marked the efforts of early small-scale diggers. Shallow (generally less than 1 m) sections abutting on those piles all showed an unmined base of calcified sands with a few rounded clasts, like the middle levels in Section 1. The compact surface of this deposit, in portions that were exposed, was pocked by solution cavities that has sometimes coalesced to form larger depressions. It seems that surface lowering and rain wash had flushed pebbles into those hollows to form localised "concentrates" that the early diggers the targeted. On the pebble piles from those there was a low to modest number of stone artefacts of which the major fraction were lightly abraded and mainly based on banded ironstone. Only flakes and cores occur in this group, with the former being usually sidestruck, with much cortex and wide-angled unifaceted platforms, while the cores were all irregular. This material with its consistent lack of formal tools is tentatively ascribed here to some early interval within the Earlier Stone Age. Less common were fresh lithics that seemed to include blades and cores with occasional platform preparation and that is taken to probably fall into a late phase of the Acheulian.

CONCLUSIONS

The artefacts seen during the survey were all from dug-over unstratified contexts and have therefore no heritage value. The further mining of this area is thus unlikely to have any impact on the archaeological resources of the Northern Cape.

REFERENCES

Butzer, K.W. *et al.* 1973. Alluvial terraces of the Lower Vaal River, South Africa: a reappraisal and reinterpretation. *Journal of Geology* **81**: 341 - 362.

De Wit, M.C.J. *et al.* 1997. Diamond-bearing deposits of the Vaal-Orange river system. *Field Excursion Guidebook, 6th International Conf. on Fluvial Sedimentology UCT* **2**: 1 - 61.

Peter B Beaumont
B.Sc. M.A. (Archaeology)
21 February 2005