

**PHASE 1 HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT REPORT ON THE
FARM RIETS DRIFT 18, ON THE SOUTH BANK OF THE ORANGE
RIVER BETWEEN DOUGLAS AND PRIESKA, KAROO 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 the farm Riets Drift 18, on the south bank of the Orange River between Douglas and Prieska, in the Karoo District Municipality of the Northern Cape. A four hour – long search by two over its full extent produced a few dozen sparsely scattered stone artifacts, but no archaeological sites, palaeontological bones or unrecorded graves were seen. It is consequently considered that this farm has no heritage significance and that further open cast mining of pre – Quaternary Older Gravels there will have no impact on the heritage resources of the Northern Cape.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Over the past century and more the Younger Gravels along the lower Vaal have been almost entirely mined away, leading diamond diggers to move to the middle Orange, where there are still extensive deposits of Older Gravels.

This study is part of an EMP being prepared by Geo – Rock International on behalf of Mr Graven, who has been in this profession for over 30 years, according to his son, Ronnie.

REGIONAL ARCHAEOLOGY

There is said to be an extensive handaxe scatter on a gravel exposure flanking a meander of the Orange some 10 km upstream of Prieska. However, to my knowledge, no Stone Age sites have, as yet, been found in the broad vicinity of Riets Drift 18.

PROPERTY DESCRIPTION

Riets Drift 18 lies on the southern inner side of the bank of the Orange River that is located about 70 km WSW of Douglas in the Karoo District Municipality of the Northern Cape. The terrain, sparsely covered by grassland and shrubs, slopes down to the river at ~945 m from a south – eastern end at ~1 070 m, as shown on the appended 1:50 000 map 2923AB Witberg (Fig. 1). About four hours were spent driving to randomly selected portions, and then walking over these, on Wednesday 13 June 2007, in the company of Richard Loots of Geo-Rock.

SUPERFICIAL GEOLOGY

Most of the farm is covered by heavily calcified Older Gravels, largely covered by thin sand, that is divisible, according to Ronnie Graven, into a higher terrance at 80 – 90 m and a lower one at 40 – 50 m above the Orange River (Fig. 2). Mining there has, as yet, been confined to the latter, in which clasts tend to be small and predominantly

of banded ironstone, that is said by him to become far less common from ~ 5 km further upstream for reasons that remain unknown. A number of abandoned quarries were inspected (Figs. 3 & 4), of which the most spectacular one, at 29° 13' 07.6" S, 23° 21' 49.3" E, had a level base of Dwyka shale overlain by ~ 20 m of stratified gravels capped by ~ 6 m of beige river sand (Fig. 3). Such fluvial deposits are now taken to refer back to the Miocene at 17 – 19 Myr ago (de Wit *et al.* 1997), and an effort will be made to see if this can be confirmed chronologically there, by way of the cosmogenic dating method. We also examined another digging (Fig. 5), next to the river at 29° 12' 18.1" S, 23° 21' 18.0" E, where ~20 m of beige river sand overlies ~ 10 m of culturally sterile Younger Gravels, that are much coarser, with far less banded ironstone.

HERITAGE FINDINGS

My four hour – long search showed that stone artefacts on the farm are confined to a sparse scatter on the surface of the Older Gravels. They vary from fresh to very lightly weathered, and are largely based on banded ironstone, but with a few on white or black quartzite. Sample sizes preclude firm ascriptions, but flake typology suggests that most refer to early on in the ESA (Figs. 6 & 7).

Near the digger camp, at 29° 13' 20.2" S, 23° 21' 28.2" E, was a small burial ground, neatly fenced and gated, with four graves, three covered by river cobbles and unmarked, the other cemented with a marble inscription reading "Hier Rus ons Eggenoot en ons vader David Jakobus Myburgh Geb 12.7.1872 – Oorl. 8.8.1908 (Fig. 8).

CONCLUSIONS

The inspected areas produced a sparse lithic scatter, but nowhere did I see any archaeological sites, palaeontological bones, or graves that needed further protection. My conclusion is therefore that further open cast mining on Riets Drift 18 will have no impact on the heritage resources of the Northern Cape.

REFERENCES

de Wit, M.C.J., Ward, J.D. & Jacob, J.R. 1997. Diamond – bearing deposits of the Vaal – Orange System. *Field Excursion Guidebook, 6th International Conference on Fluvial Sedimentology, University of Cape Town, September 1997: 2, 1 – 61.*

NOTES

- A copy of the locality maps 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.

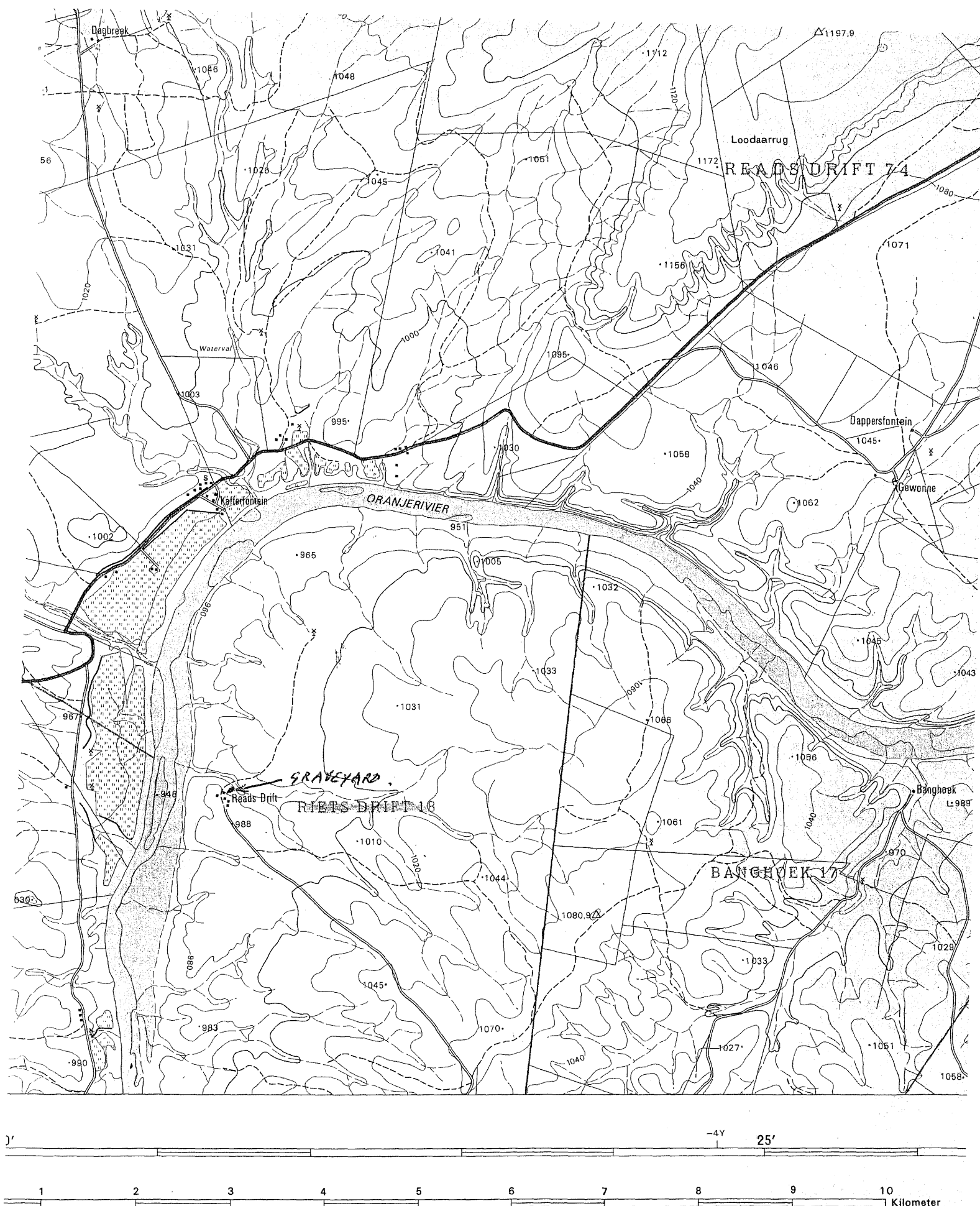


FIG. 1. 2923 AB WITBERG

eklinasie 19°22' Wes
 31). Gemiddelde jaarlikse
 (1985-1987).

Hoogtes is in meter bo gemiddelde seespieël
 Heights are in metres above mean sea level

Die ruitlyne van die Suid-Afrikaanse Koördinaatstelsel word in die kantruimte
 aangetoon deur kort swart strepies 10 000 meter van mekaar, met
 koördinaatwaardes in eenhede van 10 000 meter in blou.

KONTOERTUSSENRUIMTE 20 METER CONTOUR INTERVAL 20 METRES

in 19°22' West
 Mean annual
 5-1987).

Gauss se Konforme Projeksie. Middeleridiaan 23° Oos. Clarke 1880 Sferoïed
 Gauss Conform Projection. Central Meridian 23° East. Clarke 1880 Spheroid

The grid lines of the South African Co-ordinate System are indicated in the
 margin by short black ticks at 10 000 metre intervals, with co-ordinate
 values in units of 10 000 metres in blue

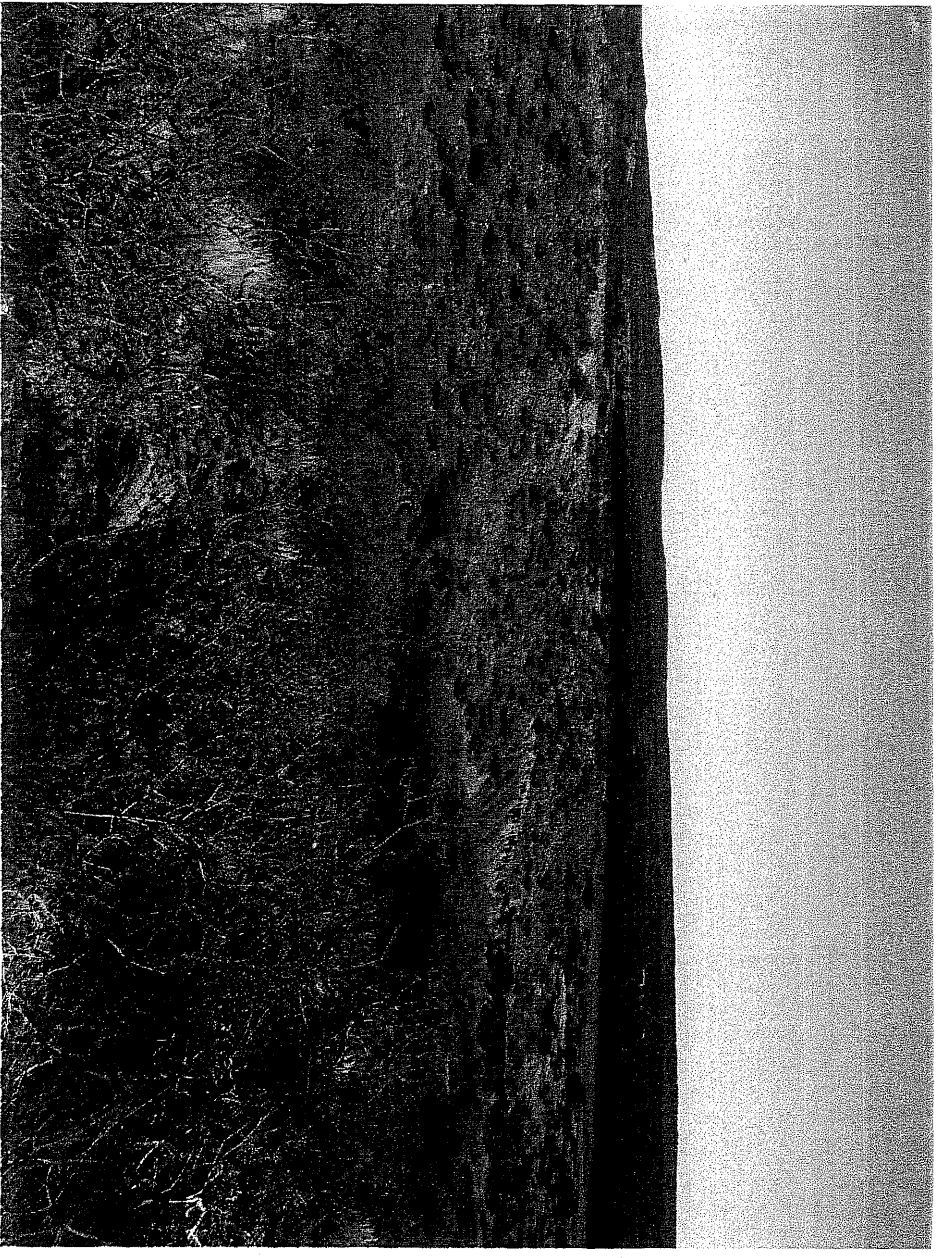


Fig 2. View towards NW from 40-50m terrace, showing Orange R in distance.

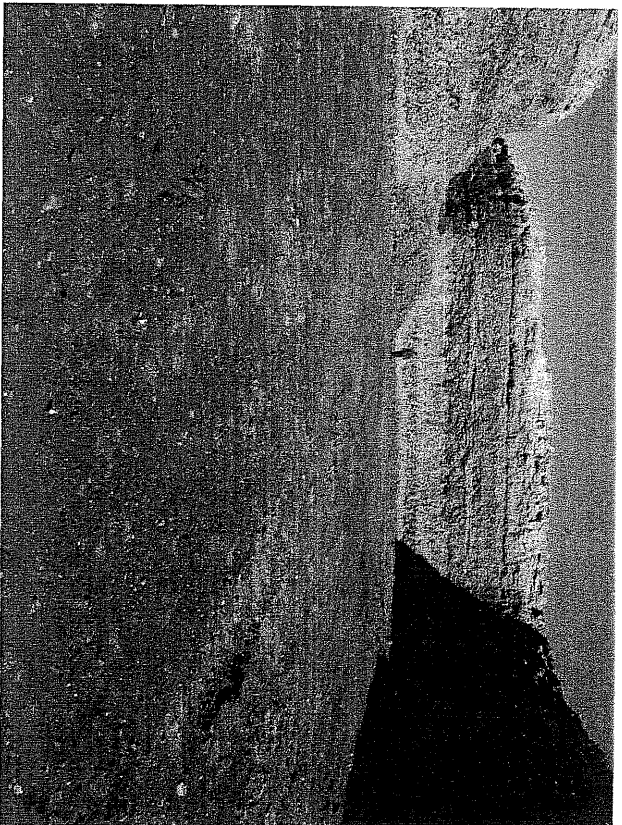


Fig 3. The large quarry is
the 40-50m terrace with
R. looks in distance

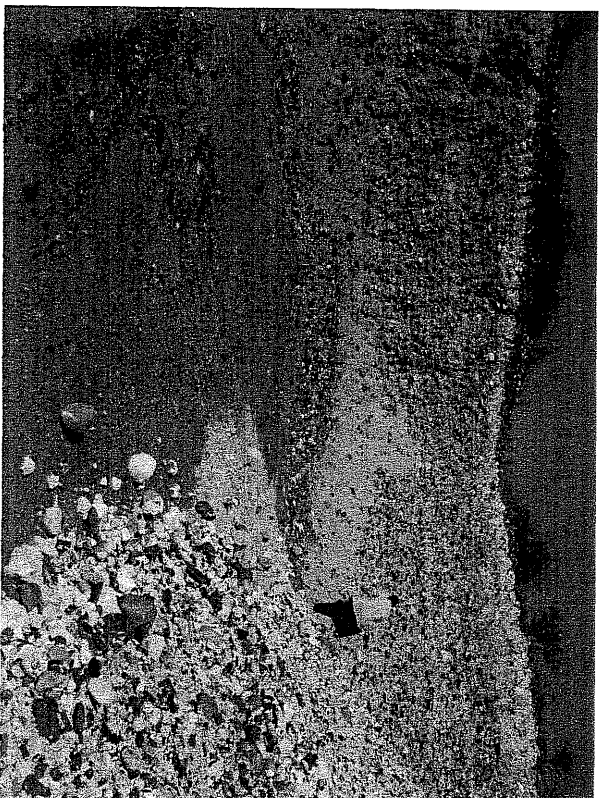


Fig 4. A smaller quarry in
the 40-50m terrace with
R. looks closely

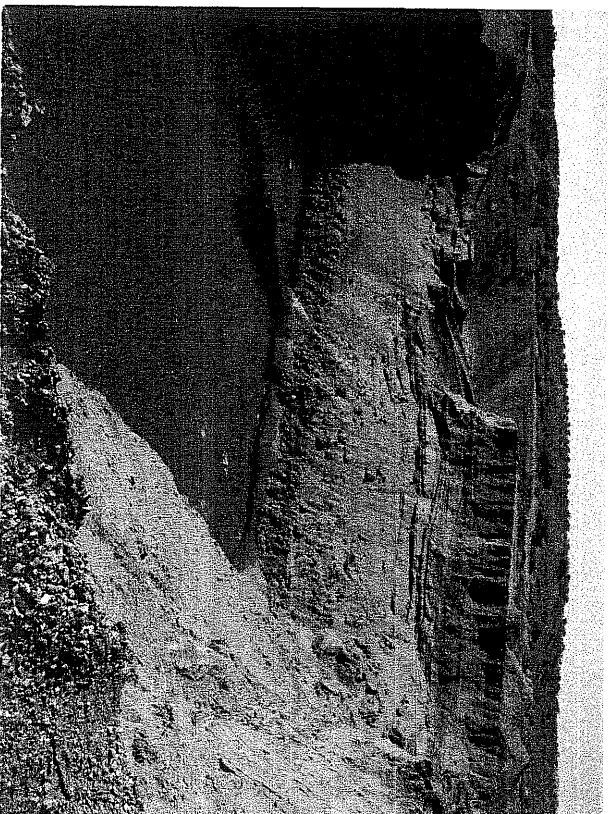


Fig 5. The Younger Grand
dugging

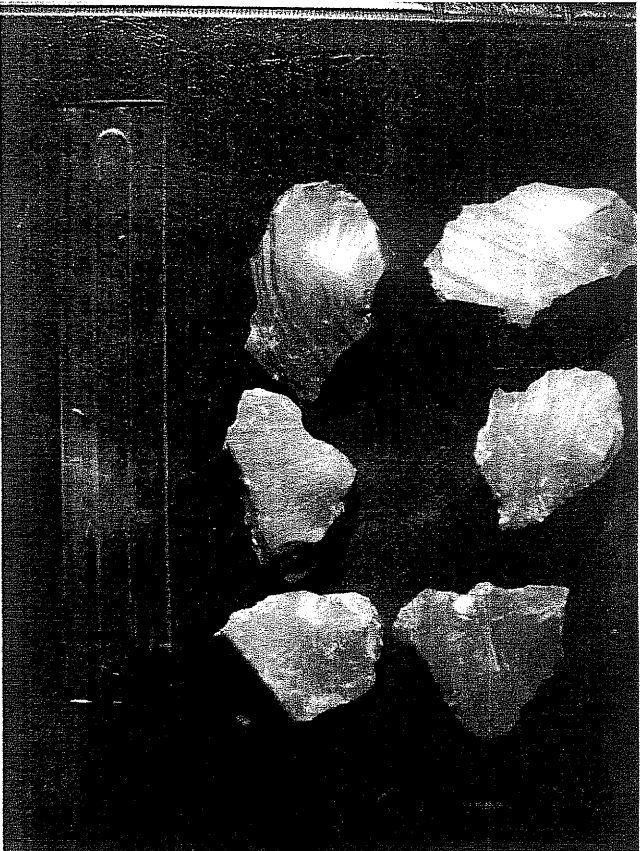


Fig 6. Rounded worn stone
artifacts from the surface,
the 40-50 m terrace.
Scale 15cm long



Fig 7. Workers and quantities
of blocks from the surface,
the 80-90 m terrace.
Scale 15cm long

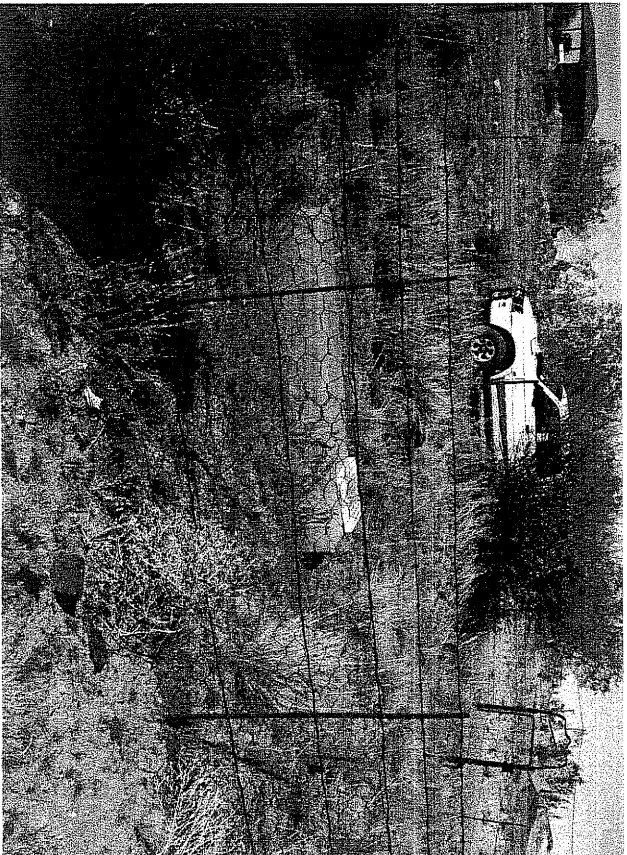


Fig 8. A small gate and
grassy area near the digger
camp.